

The Neoliberal Educational “Imaginary” as experienced
by a group of Primary School Headteachers

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by
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The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.”

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“New National Standards were recently unveiled, setting out the “skills, knowledge and behaviour Headteachers should aspire to”. Yet the environment for Headteachers has become dominated by political bullying and fear. How can Headteachers develop the skills the education secretary alludes to, and build the emotional resilience and courage needed to survive?” (Grant, 2015, para. 6)

Abstract – Victoria Carr “The neoliberal educational ‘imaginary’ as experienced by a group of primary school Headteachers”.

In this thesis I undertake a critical policy analysis in which I place education reform in the UK within the context of a changing social structure, transformed since the advent of neoliberalism in the 1970s, and examine the implications of reform on the role of primary school Headteachers.

In particular, I situate my analysis within increased promotion of global economic competition and policy supported by neoliberal ideology in which the prevailing government seeks to retain legitimacy by claiming to institute reforms to improve education, whilst simultaneously reducing direct funding which is, in fact, destabilising it.

Neoliberalism is a distinct political ideology that has flourished in the Western world over the last four decades and is based on theories of the free market; underpinned by economic efficiency, bureaucracy, rationality and measurable performativity. I look in detail at how the leadership of schools has changed, as a direct result of the implementation of new managerial instruments, and how resistance to these changes has been largely futile.

Lacanian thinking would suggest that ideology which assumes education is a physical state that is inherently part of a democratic process, inextricably linked to politics, positively transformational and measurable, is in fact imaginary (Lacan, 2006). Our imaginary “order is embedded in the material word” and woven into the reality around us (Harari, 2012, p.127). It is within this ‘imaginary’ conceptualisation that my research is positioned.

I present, and analyse, empirical data gathered from a number of primary school Headteachers from a range of contexts that outlines their lived experience as they attempt to navigate the, what could be described as, strongly surreal or ‘Kafkaesque’ (Löwy, 1997) educational ‘imaginary’, as it is currently configured and, explore the efficacy of a forum that is used to support them as they therefore attempt the untenable. The significant issue of school context as an effect of how a school performs in testing regimes is substantial. It is clear that context greatly impacts on the extent to which Headteachers must shift their beliefs and practice to satisfy performative expectations.

I conclude with an acknowledgement that to attempt to rationalise the educational ‘hyperreal’ without an appreciation of power and manipulation is impossible and, that the role of primary school Headteachers may only be plausible with the scaffold of forums such as the one examined within this research.

Chapter One: Introduction

This introductory chapter discusses the rationale and context for this research and provides an outline of the literature review, main research question and overview of the research methodology.

The evolution of this thesis came as somewhat of a surprise. Education for many people historically has represented opportunity, self-improvement and social mobility, which has been personally transformative. Tony Blair (1996) said,

“...that our economic success and our social cohesion depend on ... an Ethic of Education. That is why ... my three priorities for government would be education, education and education.” (para. 1).

As someone who was the recipient of a positively transformational life experience due to, in part, what I considered an ‘effective education’, I was motivated to replicate this experience for others. I chose to work in education firstly because on a personal level I valued it as an experience, as a commodity in social currency and capital, and secondly as I was a believer in the concept of it as a driver for societal ‘good’; in addition to education being inherently interesting.

There could be an argument that this is an idealistic concept, and potentially this is true, but even the most cynical of people would agree that education, as far back as the turn of the 19th century, has had the potential to effect a change in life outcomes for those able to access it. Picard (2009), when talking about early indications that education could transform lives in Victorian England, states, “In an increasingly complicated world, the chances for an illiterate boy or girl were slim. In light of this, a number of day schools were established.” (para. 1).

The functionalist view, espoused by Durkheim (2013) in the late 1800s, that education focuses not just on enhancing the ability of an individual to become a ‘social being’, but also the benefits to society in relation to creating

and maintaining social order, and crucially from a political perspective, contributing essential individuals into a workforce to augment the economy, suggests that there are multiple positive effects of a 'good' education. This is a view sustained in modern developing countries, as highlighted by McMahon (2010) and the Global Partnership for Education (2019) whose research evidences that a reduction in poverty, increase in income, better health, economic growth, for example, are all positive effects of education.

As my career has developed, particularly since becoming a Headteacher in a challenging school, and my awareness of other factors that affect social mobility has become more sophisticated, I have come to understand that whilst education can be a force for good and is a major factor in enhancing life outcomes for some demographic groups, education alone cannot mitigate for social circumstances.

"The lower educational achievement of white working class pupils in comparison with children from other ethnic backgrounds with similar socio-economic status continues to attract attention." (Stokes, et al., 2015, p5).

In this introduction, I give anecdotes related to my own journey out of poverty through academic endeavour, which is now professionally wedded to my educational image. The personal awareness that I have of this is profound. I was born and raised in an area of acute deprivation in Liverpool; the eldest of four children, whose father suffered with mental illness that eventually claimed his life and left my mother an unemployed widow at 26, with four children under eight years old. Yet, I was the first person from my entire close and extended family to complete A Levels, to attend university, to attain a Masters level degree (and a second one) and to work in a professional capacity. Part of that journey began with education.

My journey through education began with a teacher (what is now understood as a Newly Qualified Teacher, or NQT), taking time to care for me when I walked myself to school aged 5, who invested time in me and who saw that I was 'bright'. She told my grandmother that I was "university material" and

from that point on I suspect that I was - not because I was any more intelligent than any of my peers, but because that concept was regularly reinforced through language, expectation and challenge at primary school and at home, but it was a key event that created the circumstances for this to be realised when we moved house, I passed my 11+ and I went to a girls' grammar school. That system streamlined me for achievement and I know that the discourse of success, that was inherent in the system 30 years ago, still remains intact, as my teenage daughter now attends the same school.

In attempting to write this introduction, I find myself using a more personal register of language in this section: it conveys the more inherently subjective view that I have when discussing education; and also in order to demonstrate with genuine authenticity how education became, and remains, a visceral part of my life.

There is a difference between this personalised language and the heavily theory laden language that I will use in subsequent chapters, because I believe that in doing so I attempt two things; to create distance between me as a person and also an objectification of the situation that I present. Through depersonalisation, paradoxically, heavily theoretical language produces distance between personal and social processes that happen in the educational transaction yet whilst it may appear to produce distance, it also allows an intimacy between those processes. This is epitomised through the examination of Baudrillard (1994) and his concept of 'hyperreality' explored later in the thesis in which, essentially, what appears so abstract is actually what takes place. Using theory such as this helps to see beyond the privileged discourse of pass rates, failing schools, inspection criteria and children as data for example, and recognises the reality of individual children and their families, teachers and Headteachers that is behind that discourse.

The challenges that I have faced as a Headteacher, in an area of social and cultural diversity and deprivation have placed great strain on my personal conceptualisation of education. Through relentless daily resolution of conflict and discontinuity between national and local policy implementation;

balancing the competing needs for families requiring social and medical care intervention; doggedly supporting staff morale whilst preparing for the rigour of inspection, the integrity of the fabric of my understanding of education has increasingly been threatened. However, even though I have been through a positive personal experience of education, in contrast with my professional experiences of it as a concept, and this has caused within me a degree of scepticism, I am still invested in working in a way that promotes social mobility and does make a difference to children's lives.

Whilst the very real daily occurrences that I manage, such as, for example: an angry parent unhappy that the school has had a negative Ofsted report and who does not understand the complexity of the inspection process; and an angry parent whose child has not attained the expected standard in the SATs and is negatively affected by this and feels that their child will now be a failure; an angry, aggressive parent who has been reported to Children's Social Care for neglecting to feed and care for their child due to their own drug and alcohol dependency; a distressed child who is unable to access mainstream education, but due to limited spaces in special provision, must attend a mainstream school and is under such duress in a classroom that they physically destroy it and may harm themselves and others as a result; an angry parent who has been fined for taking a cheaper holiday in term time can be distressing for me, they are not isolated incidents. These incidents are things that I deal with but they are not personal to me or to the setting in which I work.

My daily routine is representative of a number of Headteachers, and it has become apparent that for those who share these experiences, the issues are structural, not personal, and this is based on not just policy analysis discussed in the next chapter, but also empirical evidence gathered as a result of this thesis.

It is when viewed through the threadbare fabric of education partially exemplified above as I, and other participants of the programme analysed in this thesis, do, it would appear that the transformational experience that we

idealise may have been consumed by a neoliberal ideal that has caused pain and abjection. Rather than an institution that can change lives for the better for all, this thesis acknowledges and exposes aspects of a system that can in many ways fail those who live in social deprivation, have little relevance to the plight of children in an economically, politically and culturally diverse and challenging world and which may not cater for individuals, or the minority groups, but only the majority who have the social gravitas to interact with it. It is because this vocation is about something that the participants of the programme value, which is discussed within this research, that it matters so much. This thesis is, in part, about those who work with the socially disadvantaged and how schools that serve them cannot make social capital work for them. My experience is replicated by findings described by Stokes et al. (2015), Lessard-Philips and Li (2017), and Shah (2016).

It may be tempting to create a simple division of education but in reality it is very difficult to separate what works from what does not work, it is subjective and complicated. In discussing data, I suggest that Headteachers who struggle are doing so because they have such strong social convictions and beliefs and these are compromised as they work in challenging circumstances within strict accountability frameworks. One of the issues discussed in the analysis chapter is how tempting it is to continue to mitigate for the negatives encountered by some children and professionals in favour of those for whom the system works, because the alternative for Headteachers is to acknowledge, publically, that the system of education will not help everyone. But in *not* acknowledging this, and possibly because to do so would be unacceptable and invite negative attention from those charged with accountability, some Headteachers face the tangible understanding of this fact and yet must repress it and attempt to create acceptable narratives for it. Those alternative versions of reality, or versions of imagined publically palatable reality, are essential when acknowledging the true reality may compromise the ideals underpinning the reasons for electing to do the role. This conflict, often played out in private for a number of reasons explored later, may cause cynicism, undue anxiety, an unhealthy level of competition with other colleagues, and can give rise to anxiety about professionalism,

straying into subversive or unethical practices.

It is these alternative narratives that enable millions of strangers in our country to believe that they belong to the same community as we do, that our endeavours in education are identical and replicable in any educational setting. It is not that the differing versions of education that individuals know and understand are wrong, more that they are inter-subjective realities and exist in the imagination of the groups of individuals as they understand them to be.

This is exemplified by Harari (2011) when discussing collective imagination, “In recent decades, national communities have been increasingly eclipsed by tribes of customers who do not know one another intimately but share the same consumption habits and interests, and therefore feel part of the same tribe.” (p.407). In this way, many parents share the same expectations, habits and interests in relation to test results, Ofsted comparators, homework and so on; in the same way that lots of practitioners do. It may be that it is this collective imagination that supports the view of whether the current educational imaginary is a force for good, or the opposite.

The actual research is based on the premise that there is a perceived and impending shortage of individuals wanting to become primary school Headteachers as a direct result of multifaceted issues surrounding recruitment and retention in teaching in general and, headship specifically (NAHT, 2015; Lynch, Worth, Bamford, & Wespieser, 2016; NFER, 2017), and whether that shortage is as a consequence of neoliberal ideology and economic globalisation which will be explored in subsequent chapters, or something else.

Whilst it is conceivable that a Headteacher could attain the position never having taught, it is far more common that one must first have been a teacher and acquired the necessary knowledge, skill and aptitude for the role (Elmore, 2000). The role of teacher and Headteacher, however, is becoming increasingly complex, particularly as it is configured in the contemporary,

market-driven educational climate.

Theorists such as Green (2000), Wilkinson (2007) and Ashton and Green (2006), all suggest that the role of the Headteacher is “the greatest challenge of all” roles in education (Green, 2000, p. 2). There appears to be the belief that school leaders are instrumental in bringing about success, inherently placing a huge amount of stress on leaders (National Association of Headteachers, NAHT, 2015; Association of School Leaders, ASL, 2016; National Foundation for Educational Research, NFER, 2017). However, other research explored in my literature review, for example Hargreaves and Fink (2006); Ball (2008); Davies (2009); Grant (2015) and Millar (2017) strongly suggests that the influence of a leader is marginal in most cases. There is an element of superficiality to the role, if one were to accept that the Headteacher cannot truly effect change then it would make the role redundant; therefore the career of a Headteacher is predicated on preserving the ideal, the collective imaginary understanding that they can create success for all.

This position is supported by the nature of the narrow platform within which Headteachers currently work that allows for individual leader impact. The expectation of individual impact on the academic success of a school is not supported by forms of accountability maintained within the education system, determined by policy, catchment areas and socio-economic demographics thereof, the nature of the curriculum, and funding for example; yet Headteachers are held responsible as if they could. Wilkinson (2007) suggests that policy instruments, such as performance related pay, and inter-school competition for pupil places generated by parental choice, result from the government’s desire to have a free market education system as discussed in Thomas (2013), while centralised funding, and a standardised national curriculum have eroded the “influence and power of educational professionals” (Thomas, 2013, p. 379). At the same time Ball (2009), proposes that a shift in education from “government to governance” (p. 537), highlights the unresolved tensions between accountability, transparency and, market forces in creating a situation where schools and Local Authorities

(LAs) must reinvent how they work to navigate the challenge of globalisation that the neoliberal ideology underpins.

As a result of the changing educational landscape and the inherent discontinuities within it, as mentioned above and explored further in this thesis, there can be enormous stress for Headteachers. This research gathered empirical data that suggests that some Headteachers feel isolated as they have few people they can trust; feel that their moral and ethical purpose is compromised as they must balance competing priorities on a daily basis; and feel threatened by career and life changing real or perceived consequences of accountability.

The current landscape is encapsulated by an assumption that individual leaders can countermand myriad external influences, and indeed that they should, as demonstrated in the way that The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) works, and government expectations are described in the extensive literature review. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) suggest that increases in job stress, inadequate levels of funding and an increasingly diverse student population all contribute to a lack of individuals seeking out headship opportunities. Fink (2010) however, argues that the shortage of individuals pursuing senior leadership positions is due to the current generation valuing family life over work and their desire to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Despite the role becoming seemingly less attractive, if we are to accept the views and findings of Fink (2010), NAHT (2016) and Lynch and Worth (2017), many schools have adopted a succession planning strategy to assuage this. As Davies and Davies (2011) argue, this is rarely sufficient and institutions need to be considering talent identification and management programmes to ensure that prospective leaders are identified and, perhaps more importantly, supported from early on in their careers.

Potentially, this could be seen as part of the mythology of effective leadership and therefore a huge misconception and a complete waste of time, however, the prevailing trends suggest that training and development of

individuals with 'talent' is of critical importance in the national campaign for recruitment. Education mirrors practice in business; school governors and members of the LA, with negligible knowledge of, or training in, education, are expected to appoint the most talented and capable individual to the role of Headteacher. An additional challenge is the extent to which those recruiting Headteachers appoint the best person on the day over the best person for the job. The perceived recruitment crisis in headship asserted by both National Association of Headteachers (NAHT, 2015) and Lynch & Worth (2017), makes the already difficult role of governance an even more challenging one: without a Headteacher, questions arise as to whether a school can effectively fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

Neoliberal ideologies and their manifestations have dominated political discourse since the 1980s, the impact of which, it could be argued, have had a ruinous impact on many areas of social policy in the United Kingdom (Ball, 2009; Goodson, 2014). Neoliberalism can be defined as confidence in privatisation and individualism coupled with minimal state intervention and deregulation (Hursh, 2007). Accordingly, the role of the state in providing education, healthcare and security services is diminished because individuals are expected to provide for their own social needs (Mouffe, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Government policy has been driven since 1979 to transform education services from a social enterprise into more of a profit-making machine in which education is now understood as a series of 'outputs' translated into levels of attainment, teacher performance, and position in league tables, something referred to as a 'New Managerialism' discussed in Chapter Two. These embodiments of an ideological move towards a free market describe education as a form of economic activity, valued in terms of efficiency of production, from which funding, viability, educational capital and individual worth flows. (Apple, 2006; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Ball, 2009; Lakes & Carter; 2011; Goodson 2014).

Ball (2009), has suggested that the marketisation of education has become

more prevalent in recent years because “education businesses can sell school improvement – offering schools ways of accommodating themselves to the demands of state performativity and the production of new organisational identities” (p. 86). These privately funded education businesses, often international, offer schools training, consultancy, and interventions (Benn & Downs, 2016), without much censure.

Benn and Downs (2016) present an alternative argument to Ball (2009) and suggest that the global education reform movement (GERM) is a positive one, in which increased marketisation and competition are the only solution to the international phenomenon of deteriorating public education. Whilst this notion has been highly contested over the last 40 years, it has produced a situation where policy is created in one dominant first world country and then adopted by the prevailing elite in another (Goodson, 2014). This has been significant between the United Kingdom and the United States where policy sharing has been commonplace, despite the cultural differences between both nations, neither of which have proved triumphant on an international level (Benn and Downs, 2016; Whitty, 2016). One of the main problems is that many of the policies being adopted are “based on a mix of selective evidence, intuitive prejudice and corporate influence” (Goodson, 2014, p. 774).

It could be argued that the ideological changes in education have had a disturbing impact on teachers, and Headteachers, as they are constantly measured and judged, inevitably contributing to the retention crisis outlined earlier and explored further by Benn and Downs (2016) because not all schools lend themselves to being judged well by current criterion. As Ball (2003) explains, “performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions” (p. 217). This model of education hints at the ideological view that the main purpose of education is an economic one in which passive workers are created, who are able to contribute to the economy rather than critically analytical citizens who are more concerned with social wellbeing and

environmental awareness (McLaren, 1998; Hursh, 2007).

The evolving neoliberal education system in which school leaders now function, and the cycle of changes brought about within it, such as increasingly demanding accountability measures, have had a profound effect on the recruitment and retention of Headteachers, documented by several academics such as NAHT (2015); Adams (2017a); and Lynch and Worth (2017).

Accountability measures in education tend to be linked to specific areas, those associated with presumptions about economic performance, largely to give the public an assumed link between levels of performance in some subject areas, such as maths and literacy and, both the academic success of the school and the economic performance of the nation.

“...the emergence and diffusion of new ideas, products and production techniques throughout the economy entails a process of ‘creative destruction’. New technologies destroy jobs in some industries, especially among the low-skilled, while creating jobs which are often in different industries and require different skills” (OECD, 2012, p. 3).

This simplicity disguises more complex interrelationships and does not translate into any demonstrable link between the performativity culture and economic productivity within markets generally, as educational performance does not create jobs, nor economic productivity. “Thus, there can be no definitive answer to the question, ‘Does competition create or kill jobs’ – The only answer to that question can be, ‘Which jobs? In which sectors? Over what time frame?’” (Times, 2015, para. 12).

Jones (2017) states, “neither money nor the promise of promotion is bringing more graduates into the profession, let alone hanging on to them once they are in” (para. 3), and this sentiment is echoed by the Department for Education, DfE, (2017b), when they reported that in 2016, 34,910 teachers (8.1% of the qualified workforce), left for reasons other than retirement.

The DfE (2017) report suggests that, "...the quality of teaching is more important to pupil outcomes than anything else a school can control" (p. 7). Thus expressing the notion that the classroom, and what happens within it, is the key component in the entire education system. It also identifies that workload is considered a major issue in retention of trained staff; as does the House of Commons Education Committee report, HCEC, (2017) which further identify The office for Standards in Education, Ofsted, and the DfE as the major causes of this, as does the NFER (2016). In addition is the issue surrounding the quality and provision of professional development of staff. suggestions for more effective professional development from the Teacher Development Trust Report (2014) are around opportunities "to reveal and discuss their beliefs and to engage in peer learning and support" (p. 15) and... "There is evidence to suggest that access to some form of collegial support for problem solving is essential" (p. 28). The following chapter illustrates that, despite this and other evidence which contests the neoliberal doctrine of individual responsibility, there is a potential for it to be ignored, as many reports, some even commissioned by the government of the day, espousing an alternative to the market, have been over the last 40 years.

Reports, such as NFER (2016) suggest that there is a shortage of individuals pursuing Headship, and much of the responsibility of Headteachers lies in perpetuating sustainability of the role by identifying and coaching leaders of the future, then there is a clear expectation to develop effective leadership from within primary schools to ensure the future stability of the political status quo or what I have come to understand as a inter-subjective, Lacanian 'imaginary'. Part of that development could be capacity building amongst potential senior leaders to provide the experiences and skills necessary to seek headship, but also creating opportunity for those new to the role to learn from each other through collaboration. In doing so Headteachers need to understand the complex nature of their role, how it is enacted by individuals in diverse school settings and also how it is perceived by a range of stakeholders, both locally and nationally.

My experience within the primary education sector has led me to gain an understanding of the issues regarding the perceived recruitment and retention crisis. I had a varied early career in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Kenya before returning to Northumberland. After spending three years as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of a rural middle school in the North East, I moved to Germany and spent three years as a Head of Department (HoD) in an Army middle school. At this time I also taught GSCE maths and English to soldiers and their dependents as part of the Army Education Corps whilst also completing my first Masters Degree (MA). Following that I spent four years as a non-class based Deputy Headteacher in a large Church of England primary school, which was permanently oversubscribed and in a very affluent area, completing my second MA, National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) and Higher Level Diploma in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). I then moved to take up a Headship in a different LA in a socially deprived area with an unusual, culturally diverse, demographic, where I spent the past six years. It is this experience in a variety of different institutions, over a period of 22 years, both in this country and further afield, in a number of different roles and within a variety of Local Education Authorities (LEAs, known in recent years as Local Authorities, LAs) that has given me the understanding of issues facing leadership in contemporary primary education. It has been the growing understanding of my role as a Headteacher, however, that has proved to be the most challenging of my career, as discussed earlier. It is in this role that I, and other colleagues whose experiences are shared in the data chapter, grapple with key contested contemporary educational issues on a visceral level, every day. In order to attempt to make sense of what I, and others in this thesis, have observed and how, in our collective view the ethic of care has become lost from education, I have used a range of theory.

The LA where I currently work is committed to supporting newly qualified Headteachers to meet the demands of their role with resilience and tenacity. The notion of resilience, however, has never been irrefutably identified as an essential quality of leadership. In keeping with neoliberal tendencies, responsibility for the success of an institution is directed towards the

‘talented’ individual. The sentiment ostensibly comes from the acknowledgement of experienced primary Headteachers in the LA that in the last 20 years, as a direct result of continued reductions in the School Improvement Grant allocated by central government to LAs, there is less money available for formal programmes of support or ongoing mentorships that historically existed such as Headlamp circa 2004 (National College of School Leadership, NCSL, 2004). Arguably, it may also come from a position by the LA of weighing up the financial implications of failed recruitment of Headteachers into existing vacancies along with the perceived shortage of people prepared to apply for the role, the time it takes to go through the recruitment process, and the perceived attrition within the early years in post versus offering a time limited programme aimed at supporting, and therefore retaining, newly appointed Headteachers.

To meet this objective, the LA procured the professional coaching programme entitled “Headspace” from a registered charity called Education Support Partnership. This is a peer support programme facilitated by a trained coach and made available for a minimum of the first year after appointment and, latterly the first two years.

The aim of this research is twofold; firstly to gain an understanding of the unique perspectives of newly appointed Headteachers on their role, through the exploration of theoretical frameworks that underpin notions of sustainable leadership, discussing whether this is a realistic concept, discussing the distinctive issues faced by Headteachers and to what extent their pre-appointment training and post-appointment support with the Headspace programme assisted their performance.

Secondly, to explore the perceived complexity and discontinuity inherent within the role of the contemporary primary Headteacher, in an educational landscape dominated by neoliberal ideology, manifested as ‘New Managerialism’, including notions of autonomy, agency, performativity, efficiency, efficacy, training, support, abjection, and competition. To do this, I will conduct an extensive policy analysis, spanning the last 40 years,

illustrating the evolution of the inherently political educational policy landscape. I will also analyse the common challenges faced by newly appointed Headteachers and also to what extent the Headspace programme has supported the development of a repertoire of skills, which enable Headteachers to deal with those challenges.

It is anticipated that this unique opportunity will give voice to those expected to manage current educational policy implementation. There are limited forums for the support of Headteachers; this research has offered such a forum by capturing their lived experience.

Main Research Question:

To what extent does a structured programme of peer coaching support newly appointed Primary Headteachers?

Subsidiary Research Questions:

1. What is the current context of primary headship in the UK?
2. To what extent do notions of sustainable leadership support the development of primary Headteachers?
3. What, if any, universally accepted measures are used to define professional success for Headteachers?
4. In what ways do primary Headteachers judge their professional success?

There is considerable research on the topic of school leadership and school culture and how they are shaped (Deal & Peterson, 1990, 2009; Thody, 1997; Green, 2000; Haslam et al, 2011); sustainable leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006; Davies', 2009; and Lambert, 2011); neoliberalism in education (Ross and Gibson, 2006; Thomas, 2013); and New Managerialism (Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2015).

The original contribution to knowledge that this thesis purports to make, has

emerged by gaining insight into how the leadership capacity and capability of a group of newly appointed Headteachers (specifically in the North West of England) has been developed. This has provided a vehicle for understanding the extent to which there is an argument for the replication of the peer coaching model explored as a response to the recruitment and retention crisis.

The concept of Headteachers collaborating with each other through peer-to-peer professional development in a formal and structured way may appear to be simply a 'good idea'. However, this research examines what it is about the nature and the role of the Headteacher in our current society, predicated on many inherent expectations, such as those around performance data, financial management and stringent efficiency practices underpinned by free market ideology, that I will argue is damaging and unsustainable, making a programme like this not just supportive, but possibly essential.

Thesis Overview

Chapter Two is the first of two literature review chapters, addressing the first of the subsidiary research questions which is about the current context of Headship in primary education in the UK. It looks at national policy drivers, how these have been informed by globalisation, New Managerialism and neoliberalism during the last 40 years, and how they impact primary schools, for example through governance, the curriculum, finance and funding and performance management.

Chapter Three is the second literature review chapter, addressing the second of the subsidiary research questions which is about the notion of sustainable leadership in education and how this may support the development of primary Headteachers.

Chapter Four is the research methods chapter, and it looks at the methodology used and the justification of the approach taken. It provides

details of the epistemological basis for this research and explains and justifies the decisions made regarding the methods used, along with the types of data sought.

Chapter Five reports the data obtained and the analysis of the findings in relation to each of the research questions, connecting both the empirical evidence obtained alongside the secondary data.

Chapter Six provides the conclusions drawn from reflecting back on the research questions and will suggest recommendations, both for the primary educational leadership sector and also with relation to what I would have done differently if this piece of research had to be repeated.

Chapter Two:

Literature Review 1: Globalisation, Neoliberalism and New Managerialism

Introduction

This is the first of two literature chapters and whilst both focus on the challenges of leadership in primary education, this section will focus on understanding the terms globalisation and neoliberalism and how they have influenced national policies, which directly affect the primary education sector.

This section contextualises this research and proposes that leadership within education, and primary education particularly, is becoming increasingly challenging, exacerbated by the impact of centralised policy directives informed by neoliberal ideology and drivers based on the global economy and politics over the last 40 years. Education in today's climate cannot be understood in isolation, it is imperative that there is an awareness of the evolution of current policy over time.

Education as a concept could be understood in the same way that Harari (2012) describes many sociological constructs, or imagined realities. Over time, as it has become politicised, successive political parties have been able to convince people to believe in it as a real commodity, such as a car, with components that can be modified and improved, and that the people who make it can do so ever more efficiently (for less money). Creating narratives, stories and differing realities is less about telling lies, and more about creating a way of understanding and imagined methods for measuring the worth of endeavour, possibly so that when we, as humans, try to answer profound questions about life and its purpose, we can attempt to explain it.

“When it succeeds, it gives... immense power, because it enables millions of strangers to cooperate and work towards common goals... imagine how difficult it would have been to create ...systems if we could speak only about things that really exist, such as rivers, trees and lions.” (p.35).

As stated in the introduction, there are many people, including those involved in this research, who all subscribe to an imagined educational order, not necessarily because it is objectively based on truth and unequivocal evidence, but because by believing in it, as a collective, should create the co-operation required to improve outcomes for all members of our society. Accepting and working within an imagined order such as education, or law, is the only way that everyone involved in maintaining and upholding the imaginary can co-operate effectively.

Indeed, this understanding of the way that conceptual and cultural forms of being are understood as actual, almost fundamental realities, has a robust theoretical framework, as described for example by Lacan (Eyres, 2012), and his description of the symbolic and imaginary order, Žižek (2017) and his appropriation of this theoretical framework in order to explain popular culture and political activity, and even Althusser (2001), and his explanation of interpolation and the omnipresence of political ideology.

Despite the majority of people subscribing to the cultural norms established in the imaginary order, there still exists a cognitive dissonance amongst them. Harari (2012, p.184) believes that it is exactly this cognitive dissonance, and associated contradictory sets of beliefs and values that enables the establishment and maintenance of those widely accepted cultural norms.

This chapter focuses on the evolution of what I understand to be an educational imaginary through the organisation of state schooling, formed through policy initiatives, changes to working practices and conditions of employment and at times, what some educational practitioners, those included in this thesis for example, would consider to be a wilful blindness to data that contradicted the empirical experience of this imaginary, for example ignoring research on the negative impact of Ofsted on workload cited in both HCEE (2017) and NFER (2016).

It is the collective policy initiatives discussed in this chapter that construct what Baudrillard (1994) describes as 'hypereality'. These are the political instruments that hold hypereality in place, reducing opportunities to challenge the commonly accepted understanding of state schooling, in order to preserve the imagined order. According to Harari (2012), "In order to safeguard an imagined order, continuous and strenuous efforts are imperative" (p.124). Moreover sustaining this version of education has created an intense pressure for primary school Headteachers and their schools, the pupils, teachers and the communities that Headteachers individually represent, especially when the socio-economic environment in which the school is situated is a challenging one.

Globalisation

Since the early 1970s, the political and economic landscape of the UK has been reconfigured, as has that of many developed countries who dominate internationally: characterised specifically by liberalisation, free markets, government deregulation, and privatisation, ostensibly as a result of globalisation. Some critics, for example Chamberlain (2012); Hemenway (2017) and Kingston (2017), believe that globalisation is synonymous with capitalism in another iteration, whilst others argue that those who malign globalisation often overlook its benefits, an issue discussed by Stiglitz, (2015). However, what cannot be contested is the fact that to many in the developing world, globalisation has not brought them the promised benefits.

What is facilitated in terms of trade and cultural exchange is a reflection of the economic and cultural position of the dominant elite, which as a derivative can sometimes enhance the capital of those further down the power 'food-chain', but more often does not. For example, globalisation has led to the displacement of indigenous groups in Brazil (Chamberlain, 2012), the genocide of people in Tasmania (CGO, 2017), the exploitation of resources in third world countries (Stiglitz, 2012), the massive loss of indigenous American Indians (Hemenway, 2017), and the destruction of the way of life of Inuit people (Kingston, 2015).

In reality, the phenomenon of globalisation is nebulous, it extends beyond the literal definition as the integration of national economies into a borderless world in which effective and efficient facilitation of trade and cultural exchange is commonplace. Research illustrates that there is considerable variation when trying to exemplify what is meant by the term globalisation: Barber (1995), Scholte (2002), Hargreaves (2003), Watkins (2006) and Steger (2009).

The difficulty in finding a universally accepted definition of globalisation reflects the complexity of this as a concept. Rather than a single process, it is a series of processes fashioned by human agency, resulting essentially from neoliberal ideologies and can potentially exist along a continuum from the all encompassing view of Lauder et al. (2006), to the decidedly compartmentalised approach view of Bottery (2006). Indeed such has been the complexity in defining the concept over the last 20 years as it has emerged that Rodrik (2011) rightly states, “Read any book, article or op-ed, on the future of globalisation, or listen to any statesman on the subject, and you will feel crushed under the burden of weighty problems” (p. 277).

It is unsurprising that globalisation has a range of meanings depending on the lens through which it is viewed; before endeavouring to look at the way in which global economic drivers may have influenced and continue to influence national education policy since 1979, it is appropriate to consider what is meant by globalisation and how this is informed by neoliberal ideology. This section will therefore consider the work of a number of theorists, critically evaluating their views on globalisation and investigating whether there is any congruence between the variety of opinions.

The interpretations are wide ranging, there is the more holistic analysis of Lauder et al. (2006), who suggest that globalisation is the spatial transformation of organisations as an expression of their social relations, they suggest that globalisation therefore cannot be thematically categorised. Conversely, Barber (1995) considers globalisation as economic, which although a category, permeates all aspects of life, a view which is shared by Hargreaves (2003). However, Scholte (2002) and Steger (2009) argue that

this over simplistic view of globalisation as economic is essentially a recycling of historical terms, such as internationalisation, or westernisation.

Bottery (2006), however, introduces two primary classifications of globalisation: descriptive, which is founded on measurable data, such as cultural, demographic and environmental; and prescriptive, founded on values, and linked to the ideologies of an individual or group of individuals including political and economic.

Hirst and Thompson (1999), whilst acknowledging the influence of politics, suggest that globalisation is actually economic. Soros (2002) privileges the key roles which political and cultural globalisation play in policy making whilst acknowledging the importance of economic drivers. Soros (2002) also correctly cautioned against the impact of economic globalisation, warning against the negative impact it could have on developing countries, widening the inter-nation gap between developed and developing nations, in a similar way that it could be argued economic globalisation policy has intra-nation financial divides between the rich and the poor evidenced in recent years by several researchers including, for example, Stiglitz (2015), CGO, (2017) and Hemenway, (2017).

It is evident that whilst there are several ways of categorising globalisation, economic, political and demographic forms are the most commonly considered in the research; any change in the economic situation is likely to influence political thinking likewise, changes in global movement of people will see a resulting change in the demographics of an education system.

Since the imposition of free market ideologies and their resulting policies in the early 1980's, discussed at length in the next chapter, the impact of economic globalisation has been a widely debated concept in international political economy exemplified by increasing scholarly differences over social, political, economic and cultural influences attributed to it. Stiglitz (2015) alludes to one of the reasons why this could be when he argues that there is not just a single market place. Stiglitz (2015) underlines the differences

between nation states, despite them having a market model, and compares the per capita income of developed countries in which inequality, poverty and unemployment are reduced, whilst social and health care and perceived standard of living are better than in countries such as the USA due to the different types, and levels of, intervention by the government.

It is possible that the proliferation of research in economic and political globalisation is as a result of the impact of policy within these categories on individual citizens, subgroups of the populace, and in the case of this research, on primary school leadership. British governments of the last 40 years have viewed economic globalisation, underpinned by the political-economic ideology of neoliberalism, as the key to continued economic performance on an international level and the impact of this has been significant. Successive governments have pursued policies, explored within this chapter and the next, which aimed to ensure that the UK sustained economic development and growth, remaining competitive in global economies.

Economic development, however, is a much wider concept than economic growth. Economic growth as a result of policy can only translate into human development, and an enhanced workforce, if the expansion of private income is fair and only if growth generates public money that is invested into schools and education. It includes not only growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but also technical and institutional changes. These changes imply an improvement in the material welfare of the poor of a population, ostensibly through improvement in the level and quality of education and skills of the working members of that population. It is this manifestation of economic globalisation that has an impact on policy around education and therefore educational leadership of the primary sector in the last four decades. In order to compete in a global market children need to be equipped with certain skills and imbued with certain attitudes that will make them effective workers and members of society; this view is also applied to the institution of the school and education generally.

The educational policies that the current generation has evolved with are based on the collective understanding that the imagined order sustaining society, and therefore protecting our best interests, is an objective reality; that free markets are the best economic systems, because of the immutable laws of economics.

Neoliberalism: National policy and the role of the state

Whilst many may have benefitted from its manifestations, the concept of neoliberalism has, during the past four decades, become a pejorative exhortation in many political and academic debates, particularly when describing what could be perceived by those who feel failed by the social infrastructure of their country, as the regrettable spread of global capitalism and consumerism, alongside the deconstruction of the welfare state (Bourdieu, 1998, 1998a, 2001); Chomsky, 1999; Touraine, 2001; Plehwe, Bernard & Neunhöffer, 2006. Neoliberalism and the tenets upon which it is based have, inevitably, been brought into question because the global economy, built upon its foundations, was destroyed by the financial crash of 2008, as highlighted in Steger and Roy (2010), with long lasting humanitarian and financial implications.

Although often transposed with the term globalisation, neoliberalism is regarded as an economic theory, a composite of values, ideologies, and practices that inevitably affect the economic, political, and cultural aspects of society, explored by Ross and Gibson (2006), manifesting in individuals and groups who have strong opinions about how their lives have been shaped for the better, or not, as a result.

Foucault (2008) called this composite “biopolitics”, elements of which have been explored by several scholars in Nilsson and Wallenstein (2013), and when combined with the writings of Deleuze (1992) and Bauman (2001) on control societies and individualisation, can be used to configure an understanding of governmentality under neoliberalism which has affected the relationship between politics and education.

For Gane (2012), the first element of such an understanding is through surveillance and discipline; traditionally, the model of the panopticon in which the state watches the market, or schools, intervening only when the market is perceived to be threatened, by underperformance for example. Second, through control; where organisations arising from the free market devise methods of surveillance: and create a marketisation of the state, for example Ofsted. Third, is through interactivity; strongly connected with Bauman's (2007) theory of individualisation and his Synopticon, and Deleuze's (1995, 1995a, 1995b) theory of control society, this rests upon, in governmental terms, individuals turning to the market for direction and on the illusory freedoms promised by it. In this instance, Foucault (2008) develops the theory behind Bauman's synopticon with the conceptualisation that consumers are not passive entities but prepared and wilful participants; both teachers and parents who, for many reasons, perpetuate the system. Fourth, is governmentality to encourage competition, where the state remains crucial to the process of capitalism. This utilises aspects of the first three elements and has manifested in private versus public school debate and performance tables, for example. This, as Foucault observes, is not a relaxed arrangement, because the state and its institutions, such as schools, have to show "permanent vigilance, activity, and intervention" (Foucault, 2008, p. 132), through an audit culture of self-surveillance, in order to achieve public legitimacy in the market place, a concept will be further examined in Chapter Five.

According to this model of governmentality, rather than the state watching the market, the market penetrates all aspects of state and society, which in turn have to try to normalise themselves according to principles that inform the market, recognisable as the Foucauldian notions of normalisation and surveillance (Foucault, 1991) which will also be further discussed in Chapter Five. It is possible to explain, through this connection, the ongoing compulsion for auditing, measuring and classifying within public sector institutions such as schools: they exist to fabricate marketised competition where previously it did not exist. It is within this fabrication, or creation of a

spectacle (Debord, 1992) and inherent need to protect the imaginary in order to protect themselves, in what it could be argued, is a Kafkaesque charade, that contemporary Headteachers must dwell.

Globalisation has therefore subtly invaded the leadership and management of primary schools; naturally, it informs national thinking and policy generation for all areas of life, including education and social care. “Social sciences devote most of their energies into explaining exactly how the imagined order is woven into the tapestry of life”. (Harari, 2011, p.127). Educating people from the moment they are born through stories, etiquette, and propaganda, for example, is one way of weaving the imaginary into the material world around us – it is because the imaginary exists only in our minds that this is essential to preserving it, and that is what makes education so important in society. This section looks at the context of primary education and the way in which neoliberalism has informed national policy over the last 40 years.

That the state has an active interest in education, is unsurprising; it is one of the key methods through which the government intervenes in life and the understanding of how the world is configured in individuals. Naturally, there are other methods that affect life and through which societal norms are reinforced, the dramas that are watched in theatres and on the TV, music, the media and fashion and so on, but all of these things are usually censored in some way by the policies of the day which reflect current trends and the evolving beliefs of the majority, and may even be influenced by family.

Formal, state regulated education is, however, a key method of reinforcing the boundaries and dominant beliefs. This can have the impact of reducing the potential challenge that could be posed by democratic citizens, through creating a sense of ‘docility’ (Foucault, 1991). In education, this could, for example, be through the creation of a National Curriculum (NC), and citizenship programmes (Maas, 2007). “[They are]...designed to create malleable, robotic students who do not question authority and will grow up to

become benign citizens uninterested in questioning or changing the current power structures” (Palmisano, 2014, para.10).

“...the cultivation of intelligent, malleable citizens is of critical importance...educational policy must be controlled to ensure that the forms of intelligence that are fostered serve organisationally useful purposes.” (Scott & Hart, 1995, p. 86).

Alvior (2014) believes, however, that rather than create blanket docility, through curriculum development, the lives of individuals can be positively affected. I do not think that the two things are mutually exclusive. It is possible to have your life transformed, through education, and never to question the reasons for this, or the content of your education. It is difficult to defend the logic that the creation of a curriculum is purely for the control of society, despite the possible reality that it could be one potential use for it. In terms of docility, it would appear that the majority of young people in the country wish to be docile and interact with education as it is configured, every August the nation sees in the public domain the many thousands of students who have successfully accessed education and attained the merits associated with it (TES, 2018).

What appears easier to understand is that, in creating tightly controlled curricular that must be followed by all schools, and checked by surveillance instruments such as Ofsted, there is little room for individuality, explorations of alternative viewpoints and contest to the status quo. Whilst education does not rely on the state *per se*, because it can happen on an informal basis at home, between friends or within the community, the state does rely on education as a source of producing economically viable, and *malleable* citizens; therefore, education has become a political tool transcending the historically polarised views of political parties. The notion that an individual can be malleable can be quite emotive, but one method of encouraging people to be economically compliant is to offer bursaries and financial incentives for students to study specific subjects (DFE, 2018). Through state control of education, governments are able define themselves and their success, create and sustain cultural identity, promote their beliefs, ideas and

version of knowledge across generations, making it a key component of any manifesto, (Ward and Eden, 2009). Moreover, children are redefined as individual consumers of learning opportunities in the education marketplace (Bagnall, 2005), potentially, but not overtly, within an "...agenda of creating malleable, disconnected, transient, disciplined workers and citizens" (Crowther, 2004, p. 127).

Whilst the intent of the state is to progress the education system in definite directions, for example towards a more productive and employed population, its ability to do so through the implementation of neoliberal policies, has been at best inconsistent on both a national and a continental scale (European Union Joint Commission and Council Report, 2015). The relationship between the acquisition of educational capital and the production of jobs and growth in GDP is complex, and sometimes very much beyond national policy initiatives. Indications of this fickle interrelationship are such things as the nature of current graduate employment crisis (Vina, 2016; Allen, 2016), and the fact that the NHS is reliant on health professionals outside the UK (Donnelly, 2017). This exemplifies an aspect of Lacanian 'imaginary', in this case specifically in education, that purports a simple relationship between policy and productivity, despite the empirical evidence that proves otherwise.

Neoliberal ideologies are commonly operationalised through the principles of new managerialism explored in the following section of this chapter.

New Managerialism

"New Managerialism is not a neutral management strategy, it is a political project, borne out of a radical change in the 'spirit of capitalism'." (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2015, p. 3). This is an unequivocal statement, yet one that summarises the capitalist foundations of New Managerialism. Lynch et al. (2015) further suggest that the significance of New Managerialism is that "...it was not only exported through the veins of neoliberalism between countries (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005b; Harvey, 2005), it was also exported systematically from the private to the public sector as a mode of

governance.” (p. 4)

As will be highlighted in the following chapter on policy changes, the last 40 years has demonstrated clearly an escalation of commercialisation throughout the public sector, particularly in schools. Simultaneously, successive governments have introduced policy instruments designed to implement business ideology and practice alongside legislation, which not just welcomes the corporate sector into the governance and provision of educational services, but insists on it, for example the business model of appraisal and performance management. When viewed from this perspective, it is possible to conclude that in one way, this new managerial method has succeeded in eroding the influence and agency of education professionals in accomplishing, or even attempting, a positively transformative modification in education, as inferred by Wilkinson (2007). Although, it may have positive benefits on children and school improvement as a result, as stated in Worth (2014),

“It is widely acknowledged that teacher quality is central to school effectiveness and that improving the quality of teaching is fundamental to school improvement. Important to maintaining and enhancing teacher performance is management...” (para. 1).

Whilst a variety of policies have been contested by teaching unions over the years, there have still been profound changes in education regardless of the challenges mounted, for example Upper Pay Spine and threshold payment systems linked to performance management. One of the reasons for this could be, as argued by Alexander (2010) and Furlong (2005) that the teaching profession has *failed to unite*. Many of the priorities within independent research could only be advanced only if teachers, and the communities they serve, seize the evidence and use it to cause debate around the central educational questions which, too often, are decided upon by ministers and civil servants. A long lasting consequence of this is that the free-market ideals espoused by government have consumed the professional model as exemplified above. Therefore, it could be argued that the government have “won in their struggle to reduce teacher education to an

unproblematic, technical rationalist, procedure”, (Furlong, 2005, p. 132), when, certainly from the perspective of those in this research, education is exactly the opposite.

Rationality

The rationalisation of education has involved the introduction of ever more tightly controlled, measured and reported on instruments of performativity; the emotive and emotional impact of which is clearly evidenced in the data presented in Chapter Five. “Rational calculation . . . reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine... The passion for bureaucratization drives us to despair”, (Weber, 1968, p.iii). The creation of docile subjects, however, relies upon this collective understanding and acceptance of the majority of teachers that they could simply be considered ‘cogs’, it is only if teachers utilise their intellectual capacity to question the ‘machine’, putting themselves at professional risk, that change could be forthcoming.

The mechanism of bureaucracy could be construed as irrational as illustrated in *The Castle*, Kafka, (1999b) in which the central character finds the rules changing every time he seeks confirmation of what is expected of him in his post; synonymous with the modern role of a primary Headteacher exemplified in the data collected.

Authority and power

Weber viewed power and dominance as an unavoidable socially constructed phenomenon ‘the rule of man over man’, (Hennis, 1988, p.182). Conceptually, he understood that power was established on the impersonal, rather than charisma (Lassman, 2000). The bureaucratisation of the educational imaginary was no longer related to the individual, but directly related to being able to negotiate instruments of commodification, something that Headteachers must naturally familiarise themselves with.

As Harari (2015) exemplifies, “the imagined order is inter-subjective,” (p.131). Even if a small number of those in education, such as those in this research, wanted to change its configuration, or think differently, to change the imagined order would require the ability to change the imagination of multitudes of people because education is inter-subjective and exists not just in the imagination of an individual, but in the shared imagination of millions of people.

Kafka satirized the dominance of authority in much of his literary works. Using literature, and the fantasy contained within it, may be the most appropriate analogy to use when attempting to understand the spectacle that is contemporary education. In *The Stoker*, ‘the sufferings of the underdog at the hand of the powerful’ are exposed, (Kafka, 2003, p.11), in which the protagonist tries to speak up for the victim of abuse and is later unfairly dismissed. This narrative reveals the potentially disturbing undertones of the capitalist marketplace evoked in the testimony of the participants in this research in Chapter Five, though such fears being exposed of job loss as a result of poor Ofsted grading, for example.

High Stakes Testing

Standardised assessments (SATs) in primary schools were instituted to measure and compare pupil attainment on a national level, ostensibly to make measurable children’s learning and attempt to improve this was improving; and also to share with parents the attainment their child had made compared to national bench mark expectations. Research from Burgess, Wilson and Worth (2010), suggests that the abolition of league tables comparing national tests had a detrimental impact on school effectiveness in Wales, hypothetically, the same could happen if we abolished league tables in England, therefore. Schools minister Nick Gibb suggested: “Externally-validated tests give parents and professionals valuable information to gauge the standards of our primary schools and their pupils and play a vital role in accountability”, (Shepherd, 2010b, para. 18).

Despite the laudable reasons for their inception however, and some research and political opinion suggesting that they have undeniable value, they have failed to provide useful information to parents about how schools perform routinely and in context, (Ward, 2017a); they are simply a snap shot of one day, in one academic year group and subject to arbitrary changes so cannot necessarily be compared year on year (Adams, 2017c; Ward, 2017b; Collingwood, 2017). Therefore the information that they bestow to parents, the government and the country, is also subject to a range of influences that change annually, for example, SATs scores depend on the number of children in the year, their ability, and SEND, the most recent iteration and application of the tests, and also the socio-economic demographic of the children being tested.

Equally, end of Key Stage Two SATs by their very nature as summative tests, do not tell teachers, or parents, anything useful to support individual pupils in their learning; the children move to secondary education shortly after sitting them. Research by De Waal (2008) suggests that only 1 out of 10 secondary school teachers rely on them as an accurate reflection of the ability of pupils transferring from primary school as so many children are coached to the test. Equally, Mcinerney (2018) cites research that suggests that some primary schools either over prepare children for their SATs performance, or in some cases cheat, which can have a detrimental impact on the published performance of secondary schools as SATs scores are used to predict Progress8 measures.

The high-stakes nature of the primary testing regime can create excessive pressure on professionals to modify curricular to make it bias towards mathematics and English, narrowing the subjects young children are able to enjoy; to cheat in tests in order to protect the school reputation and their own pay increases (Busby, 2017), which are linked to pupil performance; to exclude children who will not perform well in tests (Barton, 2017), by any means; and in reality, this pressure is usually transferred onto the children, in a variety of ways, who then become highly anxious (Zatat, 2017). This

situation is one exacerbated by the convergence of many policies related to the surveillance of schools and their practices.

These tests, whilst potentially useful in some ways, may have both surveillance and punishment aspects to them, but an additionally punitive element in current times of austerity is that the government spent in excess of £44 million on the SATs administration in the academic year 2016/2017, which constitutes a 9 per cent increase when compared to the previous year (Adams, 2017b). When schools are clearly, as evidenced in the data and illustrated in literature reviewed, under intense pressure to do more with less as budgets are dramatically cut, it is unremarkable that leaders, particularly those within this research, believe that it is abominable that so much money is being spent on facilitating tests that they perceive do not benefit *any* stakeholder in the system other than the government, who use them to create league tables. "School budgets in England are facing breaking point after a combined £2.8bn in cuts and costs imposed upon them..." (Adams, 2017b).

A new version of the SATs was introduced in 2016 to complement the new national curriculum. Ofqual (2017) later published a report confirming that the tests had been "unduly hard" (p.6), congruent with the views of parents and professionals who were highly concerned about the negative impact of the tests on children. The tests were publicly condemned as disorganised and hurried, leading some Headteachers to question the decision to implement what could be considered unhelpful, costly and chaotic assessments, that do not evidence value for money, in a discourse dominated by market principles, as something of an anathema. Although there is no empirical evidence that SATs have improved standards since their inception, they remain a key instrument for change used by the government to evidence their positive impact on education. Tienken (2017) suggests that, "Such tests are blunt instruments that are highly susceptible to measuring out-of-school factors." (para. 16). Brunskill (2017) illustrates why a proportion of our children are deemed to have failed the test each year, despite the best

efforts of any school to teach them the curriculum and mitigate for social circumstances,

“If the government set a test that every single child passed, it would indicate a huge flaw in the design of that test, not a miracle composed by teachers in classrooms. Tests are designed to discriminate. Fail to do so and they fail in their core purpose.” (para. 10).

Regardless of the efficacy of SATs in raising standards, and their design, which necessitates a proportion of children failing each year, the results are used to rank schools and create competition for school places and increased impact on the ability of the children to produce good results. This does not always produce the positive impact on children that it sets out to do.

Audit Culture

There is evidence to suggest that despite innumerable policy changes, heightened expectations of what primary schools can and should be doing with children to ease social and learning issues, successive government rhetoric about the improvements that they have made, and increased tension around accountability, all of which amount to a huge increase in teachers' workload, educational standards have not improved since the mid-1990s, (Coe, 2013). Despite the illusionary commonalities between schools, or groups of children the same age, there is no single approach to the concept of schools successfully increasing productivity in the current market place. Schools are extraordinarily complex environments, some have problems so socially ingrained that they present as incapable of improvement under current criteria, regardless of the support or money invested in them. This could be due to different socio-economic demographics in catchment area, funding, and staff. Therefore, blaming leaders for lack of attainment in children is not only unjust but has other repercussions, explored by Harris (2017), “This blame culture filters out to the wider community, which in turn develops its own negative attitude towards the school. Over time the feeling of negativity and isolation eats away at every individual involved.” (para.12)

It has taken manifold initiatives over a four-decade timeframe to increase the workload of those currently in primary education to the level it is at now, one of the impacts of which is that significant proportions of the teaching workforce are leaving or retraining. The issue of unsustainable workload, that affects all in education as typical societal gender norms continue to unravel, means that *any* potential leader in education must assess their lifestyle and whether leadership is a viable option. "Today's working environment in education typically means that it is not simply a question of whether you think you are capable of taking the next step up when it comes to leadership...it is more a question of whether your life can support that step." (Nicholas, 2017, para.10).

Headteachers find themselves in a highly contested situation: effecting an almost impossible brief of keeping the best staff (with shrinking budgets), maintaining morale (whilst increasing workload to satisfy watchdogs), teaching all children to attain a single standard (regardless of social or educational need and with little support from shrinking social and health services), satisfying a market place where parents choose school based on provision and Ofsted, being prepared at 24 hours notice for inspection with the requisite paperwork to demonstrate their efficacy, satisfying an intermediate group of people who's remit is surveillance also (the governors of the school), whilst maintaining their own health and wellbeing.

However, the main impetus for change, as evidenced by the voices of the Headteachers in this research and reinforced by the view of Allen (2017), has to come from school leaders, as they contribute to the audit culture unless they actively eschew it, in the same way that Perryman et al. (2017) suggests that policy translation in schools constitutes in part the teacher as the subject of policy. When Headteachers try to reverse years of learned and ingrained behaviour in their school around gathering paperwork, given that there is no guarantee of protection from maverick inspectors who will demand data and evidence to prove their views on the quality of teaching and learning in their school, it could potentially be seen as a brave and reckless approach.

The behaviour, language and even thinking of teachers has changed, affected by policy instruments of managerial commercialisation which some (for example Dent & Whitehead, 2002) argue has transformed the professional identities of those in education, arguing that specifically the identity of the Headteacher has been significantly affected. Lynch, et al. (2015) suggest that one of the purposes of New Managerialism is to curtail the power of professionals, both possible and facilitated, through performance indicators and league tables, surveillance apparatus and the advances of modern technology, despite Worth (2014) suggesting that some of these instruments create better quality teachers. However, for Lynch, et al. (2015), most notably, it is the requirement of “management complicity” (p. 5), in fruitful implementation of reforms that was the obstacle. Therefore, the role of the leader had to be reconstructed in order for ‘New Managerialism’ to be successfully realised in the public sector.

With a clear focus on productivity, targets and accountability, the education sector exists now within a performative culture that has ensnared teachers and Headteachers within a discourse more commonly found in the commercial sector focusing on outcomes and efficiency (Ball, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2010).

“For some, this is an opportunity to make a success of themselves, for others it portends inner conflicts, inauthenticity and resistance. It is also suggested that performativity produces opacity rather than transparency as individuals and organizations take ever greater care in the construction and maintenance of fabrications.” (Ball, 2010, p. 215).

In teaching, unlike business, whose inputs, processes, and outputs are linked with the sole aim of maximising profit, which is easily measured, there is no comparable objective. Government initiatives lead the general public to believe that units of progress are able to be measured thus, however it is clear that myriad factors affect a child and how he or she may learn, most notably the social circumstances in which they are born and live, the aspirations, social and cultural capital of their families (Bourdieu, 1986;

Harris & Goodall, 2007; Harris, Andrew-Power & Goodall, 2009; Epstein, 2011; Constantino, 2016). The obsession of policy based on narrow, high stakes performance indicators, in children as young as four (Staufenberg, 2017), has served the neoliberal purpose of introducing an arbitrary educational 'bottom line' from which imaginary progress can be measured over time, and has fundamentally changed the way teachers perceive their work and performance in the classroom.

The commercialisation of the education system in England, as a result of the ideology behind the policies, transformed the structure, management and practice of education in addition to all of those who work within it.

Commercialisation, as argued by Wilkinson (2007) has created a paradigm of teaching which functions in a "cultural vacuum abstracted from any socio-historical context and divorced from any sense of meaningful professional idealism." (p. 380). What makes this difficult to accept for many teachers and leaders, as is evidenced in this research, is that it is still considered a vital social enterprise, rather than a business.

In considering the way that selling education as a commodity can be extremely profitable for the state, for example, in 2004 the UK earned an estimated £28bn from, for example, selling schools training and consultancy as illustrated previously (Ball, Dworkin & Yrnonides, 2010; Benn & Downs, 2016), it could be argued that the marketisation of education has been a success, particularly when you consider that this income was 50% higher than both the financial and motor industries in the same year. This success comes at a cost, however.

In a market led system, the role of the state is to facilitate the market and enable the consumer. The consumer citizen discussed by Rutherford (2005), is a construct, rarely bearing any resemblance to the reality experienced, in which the student, the child, defined as an economic maximiser (Lynch et al., 2015), is motivated, well resourced and highly capable of making effective choices in the market. In this neoliberal landscape, therefore, it is the fault of the consumer (the child), and *their* choices, should the consumable good

(education) prove ineffective. Thus vindicating the view of Wilkinson (2007) in which the view of the government is that the child is culturally isolated, existing in a void in which they cannot claim to be influenced by family, socially constructed decision making or personal history: including special educational need or trauma, despite evidence to the contrary in the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) Report (2017) which evidences that "...in today's Britain, where you start from has a big influence on where you end up...the link between demography and destiny is becoming stronger rather than weaker", (p. 2).

This imaginary, in which the modern 'consumer child' exists, essentially creates a notion of education in which education becomes another consumable, rather than a human right, and inevitably creates a situation where establishments offering educational goods (such as off-the-shelf learning materials, computer programmes and technology such as ipads) need to ensure that they meet the market demands for what is taught, and not taught, and how to commodify the contents of that teaching effectively. The more sinister side to this is exclusion, in many forms, of pupils who will not or do not perform and bolster published examination results, is exemplified by Millar (2017),

"...if you put schools into a market, and expect them to compete, they use the tools of the market to succeed... The market's magical powers to raise standards, give everyone choice and iron out inequalities have turned out to be a myth... One of the worst features of the current system is that the schools that take the honourable path can never hope to compete with those who game the system. Yet the mirage of the market is still blinding people to its dark side." (para. 4 & 13).

This is also alluded to by the SMC (2017) report, in which it is evident that: "Some of the richest places in England like West Berkshire deliver worse outcomes for their disadvantaged children than places that are much poorer..." (p. 1). There is no place for a poorly performing child in a school that requires high stakes tests to be passed well. Affluent parents, with money and social capital, are able to take their children to schools in which all children are high attaining; unlike those who are disadvantaged who must

access the local school. Disadvantaged children, and those with additional social and emotional, behavioural and learning issues, are often removed from high attaining schools to protect the fragile state created by high stakes accountability, and to protect the 'imaginary'.

The impact on educational policy: the Conservative years

To attempt to make sense of current policy in isolation is futile. The policy initiatives we experience today are a direct result of many layers of policy inculcated since 1979. Although extensive, this policy analysis is not exhaustive and serves to illustrate the origins of many contemporary political educational strategies.

The advent of neoliberalism as the dominant force in British politics occurred in 1979 with the Conservative Party, led by Margaret Thatcher, coming into power. To understand the current educational climate, and to situate the analysis found later within this thesis, it is important to trace the historical inception of major developments such as: the eroding of agency; the firm control of a central government; the changing nature of what education means towards a more functionalist model, all under the guise of marketisation of the sector. Thatcher's government policies closed what the party saw as unprofitable industries, selling many off in a privatisation movement, and promoted huge and long lasting social and economic restructure, (Jones, 2003). Since then, through the layers of legislation outlined below, the ideology has become firmly embedded and is the structural skeleton of decision making at Westminster even today.

Conservative policies initiated in 1979, therefore, have affected all aspects of public services since, as legislation forced neoliberal principles into the heart of all public policy, as well as industry. The last 40 years has represented a period of unprecedented movement in education, discussed below. This upheaval covered matters of the curriculum with respect to what was taught and to whom, when and how children should learn, and how often and in what way their learning should be assessed. During this time, the changes

also concerned themselves with teachers in respect to how they were selected, trained, deployed, paid and appraised. In addition, changes also affected how schools were structured, funded, governed, and held to account. Neoliberalism, like globalisation, a nebulous ideology, is predicated on advancement of market principles, driving down costs, privatisation and deregulation. The outcome of these processes was a form of governance in which LEAs, known today as LAs, were weakened, whilst central authority in Westminster was strengthened, (Jones, 2003).

Conservative education policies in the 1980's, it would appear, had two priorities: firstly, to alter national education into a free-market, rather than a public service based on welfare state principles whose inception began in post-war England. To do this Thatcher employed as Secretary of State (SoS) Keith Joseph, a well-known advocate of free market ideas such as parental choice and autonomy from state interference. Secondly, to transfer power from the LEAs back to central government. This move was given added momentum by the Black Paper (1977), in which it was set out that LEAs would no longer have the power to allocate children to schools, this would come from schools themselves. It also outlined plans for a new centrally administrated inspection body, a new NC, and government specified standards of expectation: all of which remain today.

Joseph, as SoS in the 1980s, created a situation where autonomy in *any* school was impossible. Joseph found himself in charge of the policy machinery, still in place today, which was increasingly involved in specifying the minutiae of everyday practice of those in education at all levels, through complex accountability regulations designed to measure the effectiveness of the process and outcomes of schools, (Jones, 2003). Conservative policies manifested in earnest in three areas: the curriculum, including its implementation, instruments of measurement and success and inspection; teachers, including Headteachers, their training, pay, conditions; and LEAs, and their managed dissolution through successive acts and national policies.

A. Curriculum

In 1979 the Conservatives published LEA Arrangements for the School Curriculum (DES, 1979) with the expectation that all local authorities would make public the taught curricula within their schools.

The School Curriculum (Department of Educational Standards, DES, 1981), in which the SoS outlined the detailed approach that he expected all schools to adhere to, followed rapidly. A precursor to the NC, this was the first instrument of central government control intending to homogenise learning for children without regard for cultural background, specific need or social demographics of the individual school or child and with no mention of the role of the LEA in its implementation – thus hinting at the changes to come. The intent of the reforms was to increase interschool competitiveness, therefore driving up standards. What was omitted was the proviso that not all families, communities and people are the same; and that social and cultural effects such as need and disposition are individual. Indeed, Thatcher famously declared that there is no such thing as society, only individuals, as a way of illustrating her early ideological position and the new direction of government and its policy (Moore, 2010).

Further nuances in the degree of control exercised by Westminster in terms of curriculum came from the DES (1983) Circular 8/83 which requested that each LEA provide a progress report to Westminster about the provision of the curriculum in its primary and secondary schools including a description of input by Headteachers, teachers, governors and parents in the processes of drawing up their curriculum policy. Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) produced a number of progressive publications following this to attempt to guide policy formation in school, many of which again, retain a legacy today.

One such policy, The Curriculum from 5 to 16 (DES, 1985), for example, argued that the school curriculum should be thought of as both the formal suite of subjects offered, and also extracurricular activities and other individualised elements which produce the school's 'ethos', such as equal opportunity, the values and vision epitomised in the way the school was

organised and managed. This implied that the school could retain some degree of individuality, that the vision required to create an effective ethos was important – although unquantified and unqualified in the narrative. It is debatable whether this has ever manifested itself in any school as a direct result of the conflicting accountability policies that have also influenced education.

Contradictory to the 1983 circular, in 1984, the Schools Council was abolished. This decision effectively reduced the influence of teachers in curriculum development whilst simultaneously increasing influence over the development by central government. Although it was replaced by the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC), the remit of the two organisations was different and therefore the ability to influence curricular, by teachers, was completely eradicated.

Despite alluding to individualism in 1985, in 1987 the government published *The National Curriculum 5-16* (DES, 1987). Ostensibly a consultation document, it set out plans for the introduction of a NC and associated instruments for assessment that would, once the consultation became policy, change the nature of education.

In February 1992, Kenneth Clarke SoS during John Major's tenure as Prime Minister, commissioned Robin Alexander, Jim Rose and Chris Woodhead (Alexander et al., 1992), to produce a report about educational reform requirements in preparation for a General Election and a manifesto. This in itself exemplifies the partiality and bias of the expected outcomes of the report and it was unsurprising when, written in just one month, the report came out with some very contentious recommendations, such as: there was evidence of falling standards, teachers should instruct not facilitate, there should be more whole class instruction, more emphasis during formal teaching time should be placed on subjects of the NC prescribed by Westminster, children should be ability grouped, primary teachers were ill-equipped to teach specialist subjects, and finally, as applicable to this research, that Headteachers should teach.

It was predictable that the report caused controversy and was in direct opposition to the progressive Plowden Report of the 1960s, which had, until 1979, informed much of the policy implemented in education. The report of Alexander et al. (1992) distilled the ideology of a new age of centrally prescribed and controlled education, judged by testing and inspections and designed to inform parents of the outcomes of those judgements so that choice could be made in a market place. It built upon the prevailing view of the previous Conservative government, and on successive policy making. Upon the re-election of Major in 1992, despite a change in SoS from Clarke to John Patten, and a rebranding of the Department of Education and Science (DES) as the Department for Education (DfE), the inclinations of the government remained resolute.

Indicative of the discontinuity between public rhetoric and policy, Patten famously likened children to vegetables, despite the obvious flaws in the analogy, and made the suggestion that the educational offer of the Conservatives would nourish these vegetables equally, despite the evident desire by the Conservatives for elitist and selective education.

“...a century that introduced universal education at its outset; then tried to grade children like vegetables; then tried to treat them ... like identical vegetables; and which never ever gave them the equality of intellectual nourishment that is now being offered by the National Curriculum, encouraged by testing, audited by regular inspection.”
(Patten, 1992, p. 20-21).

Two successive reports reviewing the NC, the Dearing Review (Dearing, 1993) and the Warwick Evaluation (Raban et al., 1994) suggested that it had actually become a completely unwieldy configuration, impossible to put into practice. Also arguing that the time spent on paperwork and testing was damaging good teaching and learning, something echoed by the views of many teachers in today's educational landscape.

Recommendations were clear to Westminster in both documents and involved autonomy for schools and significant reduction in testing – but as

these directly opposed neoliberal dogma upon which these instruments had been created, suggestions such as those that follow, amongst many others, were rejected: reduce the content of the NC; spend less time on testing; allow schools more discretion of content taught; monitor teaching English as it was too heavily influenced by SATs; and perhaps most importantly, given the long list of interference by government in Educational policy, a period of stability needed to be established enabling teachers to make informed professional decisions about the best ways of planning and teaching. This advice was the result of decisions and the implementation of legislation in connection with the NC and its assessment between 1979 and 1994, in which 16 laws were enacted, and 189 associated orders and statutory instruments were implemented.

Whilst the government accepted some of the recommendations, there was another Education Act implemented that year. The changes wrought in the 1994 Education Act (HMSO, 1994) made stipulations about the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) so whilst the Government had made concessions and taken cognisance of academic research, they also made plans to ensure that control was still maintained through teachers, and how they were trained.

There were a succession of policies during the Conservative years that indicated the characteristics of direction; on the whole these included marketisation, a necessity to bolstering the educational imaginary. These policies were further developed by New Labour.

Although this could have been written in 2017, Stephen Byers in 2002, under Tony Blair and New Labour, announced that every LEA in England was required to have ambitious literacy targets, threatening to expose primary schools he felt were complacent and in his view were coasting based on published test results. This characterised a substantial increase in government interference in the curriculum and an undeniable link to neoliberal rhetoric and New Managerialism: schools had to perform or face public shame and government ridicule. Schools were told exactly how to

teach both maths and literacy in exacting detail despite increasing national concerns about the actual efficacy of the National Literacy Strategy. McAvoy (2004), commented '...history, geography and the arts are suffering because of the government's obsession with tests, targets and tables'; Tomlinson (2004), warned the Government that exam overload was harming pupils; both points are just as true today. The government obsession with high stakes tests, targets and league tables was only applicable to England, as both Scotland and Wales eschewed the model. The government believed tests were essential to drive up standards, and when the results did not reach targets set, teachers were expected to accept the blame. However, it could be argued that these tests were designed not to support the growth and development of children; there has yet to be designed an effective one-size-fits-all test that accounts for difference in age, ability, social influences, familial support and other external factors, and simply measures the accrual of information that a child can recall on a given day and in a given set of circumstances; it is possible that the tests were designed to assess the effectiveness of Government policy.

B. Teachers

A second approach to centralising legislation around control in education was to gain greater control over teachers and not just what they taught, which the government had achieved through a NC, but how it was taught, and in order to do that extensive policy around teacher training was required. Teaching prior to this was seen by some, as a social mission, at an individual, community and cultural level: such as the work undertaken by Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) or in Leicester with the Integrated Humanities Project (Lowe, 2007), where teachers worked across schools and collaboration was commonplace. This progressive freedom to experiment with curricular appropriate to the individual school was in stark contrast with the competitiveness, instrumentalism and technocracy of what was to come, and indeed what remains today.

In order to regulate standards in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in 1984 the

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) was established; there have, of course, been other iterations of such an organisation since, for example The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

Teacher training has undergone several policy modifications in recent years, until recently it was posited that teachers should only be recruited if they had a 2:1 degree; also they should attain a Masters degree; and in a u-turn expected to end the recruitment crisis, in October 2017 a potential teaching candidate would not need a degree, rather an apprenticeship would suffice, (Wittaker, 2017).

As a result of the abolition of the Schools Council, in which teachers were very active participants in curriculum design, the state shared the remit between the SoS nominated School Examinations Council (SEC), and the School Curriculum Development Council (SCDC), who actually had no power to influence policy.

A final installation of early Conservative neoliberal policy around teacher control took place in 1985 when the SoS proposed linking performance with teacher appraisal and ultimately introduced the notion of performance-related pay, which still remains today. At the time, this resulted in a year of industrial action. Over the last 30 years, however, this introduction has resulted in several outcomes one of which is a national shortage of teachers, and therefore Headteachers (NAHT, 2017; Foster, 2017), and depressed the morale across the profession. "It has been contended both that insufficient new teachers are being recruited and that the retention rate of existing teachers could be improved." (Foster, 2017, p. 3).

Some research suggests that this picture may become familiar in the future also depending on the outcomes of the global austerity drive and the national 'Brexit' agenda.

"It is suggested that the pressure on teacher supply may increase over the next few years for a number of reasons, including: There could be greater competition for graduates during a period of public sector pay restraint. Depending on the final Brexit deal, the UK's exit

from the European Union could potentially make it harder to recruit teachers from the EEA to fill any shortages.” (Foster, 2017, p.5).

The establishment of Ofsted, it could be argued (as suggested in Rhodes, Neville & Allan, 2004), was another potential factor influencing the significant drop in the morale of teachers. The vocation that many had enjoyed in more progressive years was steadily compartmentalised in order to be effectively judged by those with potentially no knowledge of education (lay inspectors); work load was increased dramatically as there was an inordinate amount of paperwork required, not just to satisfy government and performance expectations, but also prior to an inspection; moreover there were legitimate concerns about the accuracy and fairness of some of the published reports, which were inevitably used as a basis for 'naming and shaming' poorer performing schools, the results of which were that careers were ended, especially those of the Headteacher. This, it could be argued, illustrates deskilling and politically reorientating the notion of teaching, and what teaching was meant to represent and provide. The consequences of a school failing based on high stakes tests and published results have always been, and still are, significant, not least for the Headteacher who could feel compelled to resign or even be dismissed (Lepkowska, 2014). This is potentially a very similar situation in the contemporary world of school inspections, despite assertions from Ofsted that this is not the case (Harford, 2017).

The independent National Commission on Education (1993), published a report outlining their concerns about the direction in which education was travelling. Ostensibly it looked at secondary education and how the Conservative government appeared determined to dismantle it, but much of the content is applicable to the primary sector both then and today. The report exposes neoliberal ideals and condemns them, suggesting that the Conservative government and their policy drives would simply be divisive and create either elitist or sink schools based on competition and market ideology, something that appears to have come to fruition and shared with the public in the SMC (2017) Report. The NCE Report (1993) encapsulated

and reiterated the view of those in education at that time, that it was more important for the future success of the country to achieve better learning outcomes for *all* children, particularly for those at the lower end of attainment, rather than perpetuate the social divide felt between schools in certain geographical areas or who were able to select pupils. This has not happened. The NCE Report (1993) also pointed out the obvious, serving a local community and catering for all abilities of child may work against a school because parental choice, when exercised, could be used to escape from the local school; highlighting that parents who were exercising their choice often used it in favour of schools with other pupils of a similar and “appropriate” background. (NCE, 1993, p. 181-2). As Foster (2017) agrees, recruitment and retention of teachers in schools deemed under performing or less popular, as a result of league tables and tests, or geographical area, is an issue. The same issue is evident in recruitment of Headteachers: Ambition School Leadership, ASL, (2016), report that,

“Taking up a headship in a challenging school with a poor Ofsted judgment is seen as a career risk because failure to improve the school quickly may be seen as failure and lead to being replaced. Unsurprisingly it’s disadvantaged students in areas with relatively few opportunities, in schools that must improve, who are most affected significantly by these negative perceptions of headship.” (para. 12).

Another consideration when exploring the morale of teachers over the last 40 years is their pay and conditions. Notwithstanding the international austerity and public pay cap experienced in the last few years, the issues were located in policy under Blair’s, ‘New Labour’. At the same time as funding for behaviour programmes was reduced, retention of teachers was affected by budget shortfalls, and testing gained ever more prominence in schools as a tool used by government to make or break their reputation, teachers pay was reviewed significantly and would be directly linked to outcomes for children, as it still is. This policy made no consideration of the child, its background, the number of hours it may have spent in school – all of which have a direct impact on how and to what degree the child may learn – it simply linked the pay of the teacher to the arbitrary unit of learning, designated by civil servants, to be attained by the child. It became apparent that Blair’s overall

aim was to complete the initiative started by the Conservative government before him, in that the state should actively promote the market in the public sector and no longer be a provider of services, but instead become a regulator of services outsourced to, and purchased from, the private sector.

As a natural extension of teachers, Headteachers have also faced many barriers to the profession. The recruitment of Headteachers has become an increasing issue during the last decade. At the start of the school year in September 2008, one thousand schools did not have a substantive Headteacher. The annual survey of headship vacancies by Education Data Surveys (EDS) showed that despite in some cases the offer of a £100,000 salary, England and Wales faced a chronic scarcity of heads, (Shepherd, 2009). More than 35% of primary headships were re-advertised during 2009, according to John Howson, the former government adviser who conducted the study, this demonstrated the unhealthy situation the profession was in (Shepherd, 2010a). A year later, in January 2010, EDS reported that schools were still finding recruitment of Headteachers difficult. The same situation is prevalent today NAHT (2015); NFER (2017); NAHT (2017).

C. Local Education Authorities (LEAs)/Local Authorities (LAs)

The final aspect of the key three pronged government strategy to deconstruct education, started by the Conservatives but continued successively, was to dismantle LEAs. The government weakened the role of the LEAs by dismantling the tripartite framework of responsibility established by the 1944 Education Act, and offered parents (despite potentially limited training in or knowledge of education), through legislation, a greater role as part of governing bodies in the orchestration of schools from a strategic level.

There were actually two Education Acts in 1986, which had momentous impact on LEAs; the second Education Act of 1986, much longer than the first, and overwhelmingly more important – is still adhered to. It further reduced the significance of LEAs and put the real power with Westminster and pseudo-power with individual schools. Governors were given much

greater responsibility in three areas: the curriculum, discipline and staffing. The Headteacher was also awarded specific responsibilities including the power to exclude pupils, although policy on the limitations of this power were clear and have become ever more restrictive. Whilst this appears to be a considerable amount of responsibility, the rules governing how long a child can be excluded for are decided centrally and the number of exclusions is reported on by Ofsted, with schools held to account for the exclusions that they make. The bogus nature of the power to exclude that is invested in Headteachers is evidenced in a number of ways and is completely discordant with the associated government policy, which is an example of a further layer of undue pressure on the role of the Headteacher. Equally noteworthy, and further distancing LEAs from involvement in schools, was the introduction of the concept of educational law, thereby involving lawyers in education.

Arguably the most significant education act since 1944, The Education Reform Act (1988) finally took any residual power away from the LEAs and schools and gave it all to the SoS, thereby completing the Conservative commitment of over a decade and finally turning the public service of education into a free-market.

It could be argued that the agenda behind the 1988 Act was meretricious and pernicious but unarguably, it was momentous for neoliberal ideology in education and signified complete control by the state over *all* aspects of school life whilst simultaneously providing the illusion publicly that schools had autonomy and freedom. Illustrative of Baudrillard (1994), this 'simulacrum' superseded what was real with hyperreality, again reinforcing the imaginary, this hyperreality was achieved in subtle ways so that the nation ignored the discrepancies and actually embraced the illusion. Therefore, public ridicule and vilification awaited any school that, as a result of poor management of resources, ergo poor leadership, did not ensure that every child, regardless of external socio-economic factors, reached the expected standard as demanded by the Government at arbitrary points throughout their education. Naturally, as a result of this rhetoric, and the

explosion and exponential use of the range of media platforms since, including the internet and social media, schools in more challenging circumstances have been, and still are, badly affected and have struggled to recruit teachers and retain them (Foster, 2017; McIntyre, 2010).

As a result of this Act, discourses of education have dramatically changed. Ball (1990a), was highly critical of the Act; suggesting that it was an example of industrial management, a “moral technology”, a way of defining power in everyday school life. He recognised that it was pivotal that education was to be produced with more discipline through greater state intervention, monitoring and control from that point onwards. It was also clear that education was to be configured more efficiently through reallocation of funds and cuts in expenditure Ball (1990b). Ball drew attention to the way in which these emergent discourses were constructed to “set limits to the possibilities of education policy” (p. 23).

Local Management of Schools

With the implementation of Local Management of Schools (LMS) the role of the Headteacher and governors changed dramatically.

The traditional role of Headteacher was replaced and rather than being concerned with academia and education, became significantly about managing the establishment, alongside the governors who, despite being unpaid volunteers, were legally accountable for, amongst other things, all of the following, for example: budget and finance maintenance; recruitment and selection; employment and human resources law; health and safety legislation and buildings maintenance.

The illusory freedom which LMS was supposed to offer schools soon crumbled and even today it is possible to illustrate the negative impact of this policy from which schools have not recovered; staff costs amounted to around 85 per cent of the total budget then, and still do, therefore any scope for capital development in any area was, and still is, severely limited. Worse,

school budgets were, and are, based on pupil numbers, in an active market place where schools had, and have to, attract as many pupils as possible, inevitably, unethical practice can be the result as exposed by Millar, (2017).

However, to serve the dominant institution that was, and is, the government, LMS served three purposes:

- the creation of a free market education – more so today with the league table influence and high stakes testing;
- removal of any control, but specifically financial control, from the LEAs;
- the preservation of the neoliberal illusion; crucially, it enabled the government to abdicate blame for budget issues and place it onto inefficient management of schools – particularly as budgets were cut from the second year of LMS in 1988 onwards.

Grant-Maintained Schools

The final attack on LEAs through the 1988 Act was that of the grant-maintained schools policy. In a similar way to the Academy plans of recent years (Miller, 2011), in order to encourage schools to opt out of LEA control, they were offered substantial additional funding for various large scale and expensive projects, naturally this was at the expense of the remaining local authority schools because at some point the economy of scale required to support schools would be tipped in favour of those opting out.

Phase two of Conservative influence in education took place in 1990 when Major became Prime Minister. He had inherited from his predecessor an education system, which had suffered from severe lack of investment. Under Callaghan's government, spend on education was 6.5% GDP. During Thatcher's government it had dramatically dropped to only 5.3% - in fact, Major made no change to expenditure and it remained as low throughout his tenure as Prime Minister. By 1994, under a neoliberal informed regime, capital spending on schools was less than half what it had been under Callaghan (Bolton, 2014; Chantrell, 2019).

The Conservatives under Major were equally committed to neoliberal ideology and centralised control, undermining LEAs and controlling the teaching profession and this was exemplified in their policies. Therefore, Major did three things that instantly affected primary education:

- established an inspectorate, through the 1992 Education (Schools) Act, designed to judge schools on the basis of their test results in order to help parents make informed choices in a free-market. This was hinted at by the previous government, and was called the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted);
- created a teachers' pay review body in the 1991 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act. Designed to put in structure around pay and link it directly to performance as judged by test results giving the SoS extensive powers in controlling teacher pay;
- founded a 'Parents' Charter' in which parents could challenge schools on standards, and had rights to information on how schools are performing. Parents had choice could access new types of school and demand improvements for children with special needs. Naturally, this pushed the market place variables into the forefront of each parents' mind.

From 1979, schools faced the increasing social pressures caused by escalating inequality and social polarisation and inequality due to other social legislation. This has reached a crisis point with escalation of social issues affecting children for which there is little provision, for example but not exhaustive: domestic violence, substance abuse, fostering, adoption, mental health issues, and childhood suicides. Cuts to all areas of the welfare system only serve to create more pressure on schools as they inevitably picked up the slack in the system, whilst being judged solely on attainment of children in academic prowess. Policy some years later around Pupil Premium tried to address this but there is no evidence to suggest that it has been effective, "The pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities and to close the gaps between them and their peers" DFE (2017), and the SMC

(2017) report would suggest that this social mobility issue remains, and is worsening, over 20 years later.

Key Acts

The Conservatives, during their eighteen years in office under various leaders and with the range of SoSs, succeeded in weakening the power of the LEAs, diminished the influence of the teacher unions in education, and forced through education policies which were underpinned with greater reliance on market place principles.

In 1997 'New Labour' under Blair took over. There was no abolition of high stakes tests and punitive league tables, Ofsted were not disbanded as an inspectorate, and schools were not returned to local authority control. The belief of New Labour in the free-market and therefore its commitment to globalisation over time, exemplified in its policies, made it effectively indistinguishable from its Conservative predecessor and merely served to prove that neoliberalism transcends party proclivities and drives the majority of policy in Westminster as it has continued to do. Throughout Blair's decade in office, his chief education adviser was to be Andrew Adonis, credited with many education ideas, such as the academies programme. It is apparent in all respects, that New Labour's education policies were congruent with those of the Conservatives before them. Coalition and Conservative parties since New Labour have done little to change the educational landscape and it therefore remains resolutely neoliberal. Several key Acts of education not discussed earlier but with equally distinctive ideological undertones are discussed below.

1993 Education Act

The most monumental piece of neoliberal legislation in history, arguably, was the 1993 Education Act. It paved the way for the severe accountability measures that remain in place in the present day with such measures as: new regulations about school places and admissions; identification and

assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN); attendance orders, parental choice; what to do with schools underperforming (special measures); the establishment of new schools by what would become academy chains; nursery education; governing bodies; the introduction of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA); new policy on pupil exclusions; reviewed LMS funding schemes; and most notably, the abolition of local authority education committees.

Truly demonstrating the government commitment to neoliberal ideals, the following year Patten, as SoS, ignored a survey that had revealed that Scotland, with a secondary education based entirely on a comprehensive system, had achieved significantly better GCSE results than England which embraced its selective system (and still does), furthermore he announced that the government would support the establishment of new grammar schools, highlighted by Benn and Chitty (1996), a notion regurgitated by the Conservative government of the present day who simultaneously talk of prioritising social mobility (Raynor, 2017) whilst also advocating the provision of more grammar schools.

1997 Education Act

Just prior to losing the general election, the Conservatives implemented a final Education Act (1997) with several power shifts and changes coming into fruition, in particular around managing behaviour and performance targets. Governors were given new powers in relation to discipline; teachers were allowed to restrain pupils and detain pupils after school without the permission of parents; the limit for periods of exclusion was increased from 15 to 45 days (which it remains); schools were given permission to insist that parents sign home-school partnership agreements, although these had, and have, no legal standing; various baseline assessments, from which schools would be able to judge progress and report to Westminster via census processes, were implemented; the SoS made it mandatory for governors to set annual pupil performance targets, success against these targets would be judged by Ofsted; and most notable for the purposes of this research,

gave the SoS the legal right to inspect LAs which had become unitary bodies rather than those with sole responsibility for education as a result of The Local Government Act (1992).

1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools*

A month after winning the election, New Labour set out its plans in the white paper *Excellence in Schools* (1997). This demonstrated no intent to allow genuine autonomy to schools and indeed confirmed the high level of control that the Government expected to exert upon the day-to-day running of a primary school: at least an hour a day each would be spent on English and maths, to enable this both The National Literacy Strategy (1998) and the National Numeracy Strategy (1999) were introduced. It was the expectation that schools had targets to increase standards; performance tables would show the rate of progress pupils had made as well as their attainment; newly qualified teachers and existing teachers would have enhanced training in literacy, numeracy and Information Technology (IT) because these areas would enhance the workforce; and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this research, a national training scheme for new Headteachers (NPQH) would be implemented.

Chitty (1998), concluded that New Labour was inculcating neoliberal policies in education by basing education policy on the market principles of competition and choice, exacerbating the popular principles of all previous Conservative White Papers in the preceding government.

Understandably given the prevailing ideology evidenced above, rather than improve education for pupils in less affluent areas, government policies were actually intensifying the issues and through competitive instruments, widening the divide between successful and unsuccessful schools at both primary and secondary levels, which prevails today and starkly reported in the SMC Report *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain* (2017). The naming and shaming of schools, a policy which resulted from the effects of league tables and parental choice, inevitably caused schools in

less affluent areas issues in recruitment and retention of good staff as reputation and popularity dwindled (Foster, 2017), thus creating a vicious circle as discussed earlier and exemplified in Chapter Five.

Privatisation:

An early sign of New Labour's enthusiasm for privatisation in education was the short-lived establishment of Education Action Zones (EAZs). These clusters of schools in deprived areas essentially worked together, with government grants and sponsorship from local businesses. Within a year, however this programme was outshone by the considerable Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, a three-year programme to improve the education of inner city children. Neither had any measurable success in terms of outcomes for children but they did pave the way for the next phase of privatisation (Bradley and Taylor, 2009). The government began introducing private contractors into other aspects of the education service. It came as no surprise that in March 2000 it was announced that the government intended to create private schools paid for by the state called 'city academies'. They would be built and managed by businesses, and would be outside the control of LEAs, further devolving power from schools and LEAs and investing it in industry where free-market ideologies were well established.

2002 Education Act

The main issues affecting primary education from this Act were in relation to the expansion of the academy programme, which showed no signs of slowing down; school funds were due to come directly from the government, rather than through LEAs; and Headteachers were awarded the power to set their own budget, and staff pay, although again, this was false as budgets were related to number of children and a significant proportion of all budgets are already apportioned to staffing costs.

2006 Education and Inspections Act

This Act proposed some very extreme policies, such as: all primary and secondary schools would become trust schools, like academies, with the power to determine their curriculum; a school deemed to be failing would be given a year to improve before being forced to become an academy with a private sponsor; interestingly for this research, parents would be given the right to dismiss Headteachers, to set up free schools, and to close 'failing' schools; finally, and again, illustrative of the neoliberal ideals supported by New Labour, LAs would be stripped of their power. Whilst some elements of the Act did not come to fruition, as a result of this Act, Ofsted were permitted to give schools very short notice of inspection. As a result of the significant changes during the preceding two decades, the General Teaching Council (GTC) reported in the same year that schools in England were facing a leadership crisis with a shocking 4% of teachers wanting to become Headteachers between 2006-2011. A further blow to the professionalism of teachers and Headteachers, and illustrative of the change in role of Headteachers, came in a report for the DfES by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) stating that schools should be allowed to appoint business executives as Headteachers, even if they had no experience or qualification as teachers. In response to a speech by Michael Gove to the Conservatives in 2008, (Blower, 2008), acting National Union of Teachers, General Secretary said: "Gove's attack on child-centred learning is an absurd caricature of reality ... If there has been a dethroning of teachers, it has been because successive politicians have decided that they know better than teachers about how children learn" (para. 6). This issue is at the heart of neoliberal ideology as it manifests in educational policy.

The Children's Plan

2007 saw the government publish its Children's Plan Building brighter futures, DCSF (2007). This was a highly ambitious document, published after years of policy changes focused on dismantling the education and social care systems, yet designed to underpin and inform all future government policy relating to children, their families and schools.

It set ten goals to be achieved by 2020, for example: extreme reform of the curriculum and testing regimen, carbon neutral schools, and a mandatory master's-level qualification for all new teachers. It was clear that if schools were to be placed at the centre of social restructuring for the benefit of children, as the scope of the proposed plan suggested, then it had acute ramifications for schools, their budgets and their leaders, (Russell, 2008).

2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act

This gave the Education Secretary, Ed Balls, 153 new powers, in comparison to the 1944 Education Act, which gave the minister of education three central powers. Since the Conservative government of Thatcher, however, there had been an exponential growth in the powers invested in central government such as: the NC, national maths and literacy strategies, national inspectorate body, targets and league table administration, all controlled by ministers and civil servants, (Mansell, 2009).

Cambridge Primary Review - Children, their World, their Education (2009)

This review was the most extensive inquiry into primary education since the Plowden Report (1967). It sought to make sense of the history of policy and recognised inadequacy of the policy and education discourse in Westminster. It criticised the politicisation of education and specifically the curriculum. It had 75 recommendations, such as: SATs and league tables should be replaced with teacher assessments. It condemned the neoliberal ideals of centralisation, the “empty rituals” of consultation; the substitution of monologist discourse of power for professional exchange of ideas, (Alexander, 2010, para. 7).

It also highlighted the fact that over two decades, government had tightened “its grip over what goes on in local authorities and schools” (ibid. para. 3); and cautioned that the power of government and its agencies had reached far more deeply into professional action and thought than was correct in a democracy, advocating that there needs to be a re-balancing in “the relationship between government, local authorities and schools, ending

micro-management by DCSF/DfE and policy policing by the national agencies”, (Alexander, 2013, p.6).

The Cambridge Primary Review, similar to the Plowden Report (1967) which had 25 members, including heads teachers, and school inspectors, took three years and produced 556 pages covering a range of issues, took almost three years to write, had a broader remit than the Rose Review (2009), which was published at the same time, and made recommendations and comments valorised by educationalists. The Rose Review (2009) took only a few months to prepare, the panel consisted of Rose and a select group of advisory Headteachers (who only met five times) who produced 154 pages and did not cover several important topics which were covered in detail by the Cambridge Review, yet was privileged by the government, who had requested it. The far-reaching and in-depth Cambridge study of primary education, perhaps *because* it was independent, and not work commissioned and controlled by the DCSF, was superseded by the Rose Review. Schools minister at the time, Vernon Coaker, suggested that Alexander's report did not have an accountability system fit for purpose, clearly favouring the Rose report (Curtis, 2009). This is one example of robust and evidence based research around best practice in education for all parties being overlooked in favour of documents that facilitate retaining the neoliberal imaginary.

CSFC Report on Testing and Assessment

Even a report by the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on *Testing and Assessment*, published in May 2008, warning the government that SATs tests had distorted the education of children because schools were focusing on getting children through the high stakes tests rather than improving their knowledge and understanding was not enough to convince the government to scrap the tests for 11 year olds at the end of Key Stage 2, or even modify them.

Education White Paper

The government's education white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (2010) has had wide-ranging affects on all areas of primary education, particularly: teaching and leadership; behaviour; curriculum, assessment and qualifications; accountability; and school funding formulae. Much of the legislation inherent in this document, and those that went before it, remains today.

The consistent theme throughout successive governments since Callaghan in 1976 is the notion that the education system is a production line required to produce individuals who collectively enable the UK to remain economically competitive. The Conservatives under both Thatcher and Major sought to eradicate public services using market forces. New Labour under Blair created unprecedented social division, the academy movement and systematically sought to micromanage teaching itself. There was a chance for this to be changed under the leadership of Brown but reticence to undo the damage done was used as the foundations for the Coalition under Cameron to further ruin LAs. It is fair to say, therefore, that neoliberalism has been embraced by all parties across the political spectrum, from right to left, and the coalition in the middle.

There are several assumptions of neoliberal informed economic globalisation that affect policy in education, the fundamental one is the rule of the free market which results in a commitment to quantifiable indicators of policy performance informing practices in New Managerialism. In addition to this is the reduction of public expenditure for social services, inculcating a systemic failure to make what is important in schools measurable or accept that what is important in schools cannot be measured numerically; deregulation with the discontinuity around centralised curricula; privatisation resulting in policies around business owned academy schools; elimination of the concept of community, to be replaced by individual responsibility which leads to abjection and social 'othering' in diverse and challenging communities. Rather than increased caution with regard to neoliberalism, and an awareness of the growing issues caused by it, the government were

resolute. Acknowledging Foucault and his notion of constitutive power, Fitzsimons (2002) states,

“If Foucault was correct, what is needed in response to neoliberalism is an increased caution, and an increased imagination and inventiveness, for there is a complex problem space brought into play by such neoliberal reforms.” (para. 20).

Conclusion

The first part of this chapter looked at definitions of globalisation acknowledging that there are inconsistencies within research in this area. This section then carried forward the ideas of economic globalisation, as a result of neoliberal ideology, which has informed national education policy in the UK over the last 40 years.

The next element of this section was related to New Managerialism as a result of pressures to include the commercial elements of accountability and efficiency into the primary education sector. This exemplifies Fukuyama's (1992) idea of market-orientated authoritarianism.

These policies impact on primary education, forcing Headteachers to focus on responding to government targets and instruments such as league tables. What was unequivocally established was that schools have been confronted by an overwhelming amount of state led bureaucracy and legislation illustrative of an increasingly regulated and centrally managed system, despite detailed research (Alexander, 2010), pointing to the contrary for an improved educational experience for all. This is divergent from the perceived autonomy, which the public believe schools have gained, and which schools are told that they have. There has been a clear shift of power over schools from LAs to Westminster.

The way in which legislation impacts on Headteachers in primary schools will form part of the empirical data collated through the focus groups and

interviews presented in the thesis and will link to the first research question on the current context of Headship in primary education.

This chapter has demonstrated, through chronicling the key pieces of legislation impacting on schools over the last 40 years, that economic globalisation, underpinned by neoliberalism and manifested as instruments of New Managerialism has informed government education policy which undoubtedly have directly affected the role of the Headteacher in a UK Primary school.

Chapter Three:

Literature Review Two: Sustainable Leadership

The second literature review chapter will explore the concept of sustainable leadership, and consider the role that providing a framework for sustainable leadership can play in overcoming the challenges faced in recruitment and retention of Headteachers in primary education.

In doing so, there will be an examination of current literature on sustainable leadership and whether contemporary models are relevant and appropriate for the primary education sector. This chapter also addresses the following research question of this thesis:

2. To what extent do notions of sustainable leadership support the development of primary Headteachers?

Challenges facing primary school headship

The role of primary school leadership has changed significantly in the last four decades. The educational imaginary and the systems within it, as they are currently constituted in England, create difficulty for Headteachers when they try to respond to the increasing pressure of market based reform.

“A body of academic work explores the specific reasons that lie behind school leaders not applying for headship roles. Some relate it to perceptions of the role; it is associated with high levels of stress and workload due to school accountability measures or administrative responsibilities”. (ASL, 2016, para. 9)

In terms of the complex requirements of the role of Headteacher, or Principle, Green (2000) suggests that all activities completed fall under three main headings: academic leader, manager and administrator. Sala (2003), whilst concurring with categories of manager and administrator of accounts, suggests that the role can be considered under two additional headings of professional adviser, and public relations. Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, (2004) suggest three different key categories of

the role, although it could be argued that there is some significant overlap: developing people, setting vision and creating an effective institution; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) concur that principals should support teaching staff and develop the curriculum in the same way that Green (2000) identifies academic leadership as being a critical part of the role.

As New Managerialism, discussed in the previous chapter, materialised from the early 1980s, it made the assumption that all organisations, including schools, facilitating its ideologies of progress through greater economic productivity, autonomy, worker compliance and freedom to manage, (Pollitt, 1990) would be guaranteed economic efficiency. It is this notion, closely linked to the idea of rationalisation by Weber (Morrison, 2006) and Ritzer's (1996) McDonaldisation theory that create the landscape for contemporary leadership. The phenomenon of McDonald's, upon which Ritzer bases his analysis of social and cultural apparatus (such as education and leisure activities), economics, and politics, encompasses both production and demand in a market place, replicated now in education.

The impact of New Managerialism on headship within the primary school sector is that a new generation of Headteachers are required who are able to respond quickly, to implement, and thrive, despite constantly shifting government priorities, u-turns and periods of instability. The focus of contemporary school leaders is on increasing the ability of the school to respond to change through development of capacity, achieved through broadening skills of staff at all levels to bring about distributed leadership. NCSL (2006) suggest that those skills should fall into the following broad areas: interpersonal and communication skills; the ability to create a working environment that allows for innovation and challenge; distribution of leadership; expertise in learning; and finally, significant amounts of skilled coaching. This report also highlighted the concept of collaboration, suggesting that, "Networked learning communities, within and between schools, are now accepted as a more effective way of bringing about and sustaining school improvements." (NCSL, 2006, p. 25).

Headteachers need to be able to operate effectively in the quasi-market place driven by successive government high stakes regimes in a period with recruitment and retention pressures in every phase of education (NAHT, 2015; NFER, 2017, DfE, 2017b). Yet the reality is that most Headteachers are not exceptional super-human beings, they are not necessarily visionary, but are recruited, almost exclusively, from schools in which they have become active in developing its routines, norms and ethos; the conundrum is that Headteachers are often being expected to “assume responsibilities they are largely unequipped to assume, and the risks and consequences of failure are high for everyone, but especially high for children.” (Elmore, 2000, p. 2).

Whilst it is known that factors such as “school phase, Ofsted rating, academy sponsorship and low attainment... system instability (the pace and nature of policy changes) and mixed experiences of support” (NAHT, 2017, p.1) are associated with Headteachers leaving headship, there is currently no cohesive national plan to address these issues; if anything, it could be argued that the instability of policy agenda continues apace.

In order for schools to address the challenges in headship recruitment that they may face, there is a need to reflect on the way in which they support and develop future leaders because it is apparent that government rhetoric about this has not produced any tangible solutions. One suggestion about how this may possibly be achieved is through the model of sustainable leadership.

What is sustainable leadership?

Although leadership theorists and practitioners may disagree on a number of matters, the majority seem to suggest that there are a set of tools that can exemplify the qualities required of a good leader in order that the performance and functionality of an organisation is not compromised, and indeed thrives.

Memorable leadership has historically been romanticised, due to a tendency to subscribe to “trait theories of success” (Elmore, 2000, p.13) in which individuals succeed because of their inherently unique personal characteristics, rather than endeavour, expertise, and knowledge. This has been the focus of much research on leadership from 1840, when Thomas Carlyle delivered his lectures on heroes. In his work, Carlyle expressed a central element of western thought that can be traced back to Plato: the glorification of men whose traits set them apart from the masses. It appears from work undertaken by Lindholm (1990) who chronicled the historical course of research on charismatic leadership, such as that of John Stewart Mill (Mill, 1975); to Nietzsche, (Nietzsche, 1994); to Le Bon (Le Bon, 1896/1947) and Weber (Weber, 1947/2012), that perceptions of leadership have changed significantly over time. Whilst Weber’s work was seminal, due to the destruction wrought by strong leaders during World War II, strong leadership was viewed with revulsion and suspicion, as charismatic leadership became synonymous with dysfunctional personalities.

The problem with this model of leadership success is that those with the requisite character traits associated with inspirational, *hero*, leaders is limited, and the expectation of policy upon leaders is not. The focus on the agency and autonomy of leaders has been gradually replaced by an emphasis on the contexts within which they work, and interdependence between them and the people that they lead in line with social identity theory (e.g., Haslam, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

Much of the research on the educational leadership discussed in both this and the previous chapter suggests that Headteachers need to embody all of the requisite *hero* qualities and have the unstinting aptitude (Southworth, 1995; Ainsworth, 2009) to address the shortcomings of the schools in which they work. They should be masters of human interrelation, able to satisfactorily resolve all of the conflicts that might arise between pupils, teachers, and parents; they should be integral to their communities; and above all, they should be both respectful of the authority of external bodies such as the LA and Ofsted yet shrewd in deflecting unwelcome intrusions

from those same bodies that may disrupt the school; they should mitigate for the socio-economic demographic and ensure high standards regardless; and so on. This infinite, yet exhausting list, coupled with lack of funding to pay others to take on some of the responsibilities inherent within it, in addition to lack of evidence that a single inspirational leader can make significant differences within schools, may have been the catalyst for the concept of distributed, and therefore *sustainable* leadership.

“In a knowledge-intensive enterprise like teaching and learning, there is no way to perform these complex tasks without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership... among roles in the organisation, and without working hard at creating a common culture, or set of values, symbols, and rituals.” (Elmore, 2000, p.15).

The concept of sustainable leadership is in its infancy, as a result, the earliest information on the topic dates back to Hargreaves and Fink (2003), and all of the currently available literature focuses entirely on the compulsory sector, in which primary schools find themselves. There are many definitions of sustainable and many interpretations of how the term applies to school leadership (Fullan, 2005; Crowther, Ferguson and Hann, 2009; Davies, 2011), yet all implicitly suggest that there is an absolute answer to the recruitment crisis in the current neoliberal educational fabrication.

From the perspective of this research, the following definition of sustainable distributed leadership from Hargreaves and Fink (2006) is the one that will be used:

“...[leadership] must move us beyond the micromanagement of standardisation, the crisis management of repetitive change syndrome and the all-consuming obsession with higher and higher performance standards at any cost into a world where we can bring about authentic improvement and achievement for all children that matters, spreads and lasts.” (p. 11).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006), two of the earliest writers on sustainable leadership, suggest that the education sector is failing to attract quality leaders due to, in the main, increased job stress, and inadequate funding for

schools. This is reinforced by research from the NAHT (2015) and NAHT (2017), who state that alongside perceived risk inherent in high school accountability, particularly in challenging schools, being a deterrent, "...the erosion of teachers' pay since 2010 means that it is falling behind relative to other graduate professions, at a time when the private sector is starting to recover and be in a position to recruit more graduates and as schools are increasingly struggling to recruit and retain teachers". (NAHT, 2015, p. 1).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also argue a commonly held view (reinforced by other more recent research: NCSL, 2006; NAHT, 2015; NFER, 2017) that the concept of sustainability requires that organisations invest in developing leadership at all levels, a long-term view in which the success of the organisation will therefore continue despite the individual personality of the Headteacher, or any changes in staffing over time. When compared with the HCSC (2017) report, it appears that their view is corroborated and, indeed, nothing has changed in this regard for over a decade; leadership in schools is perhaps more acutely under stress now than it was then.

The challenge of leadership development within an organisation for Headteachers is that it requires a significant commitment from them, regardless of their own experience and skill, in terms of both time and human resources, whilst the obligatory short-term achievements, whether they are in pupil performance or economic efficiency, must be simultaneously maintained. Facing outwards and inwards simultaneously; being accountable to children and also government simultaneously; being innovative yet conforming to expectations set by Westminster all contribute to what could be described as a surreal, nightmarish and somewhat Kafkaesque world view of education from the perspective of some Headteachers.

Headteachers however do manage this, sometimes at great personal and professional cost, with the same constraints upon them as classroom practitioners, in addition to shouldering the burden of external pressures whilst shielding staff from these in order that they may perform their jobs in a positive environment rather than a toxic one caused by what is felt by many

as punitive reporting based on high stakes tests, social issues caused by the breakdown in the welfare state, and the demands of parents. Grant (2015) illustrated this point about the impact that the neoliberal fantasy has, and further highlights the acute lack of support for Headteachers in their own development,

“New National Standards were recently unveiled, setting out the “skills, knowledge and behaviour Headteachers should aspire to”. Yet the environment for Headteachers has become dominated by political bullying and fear. How can Headteachers develop the skills the education secretary alludes to, and build the emotional resilience and courage needed to survive?” (para. 6)

Building upon Fullan (2004) and his view that sustainability is centred on capacity to engage in improvement based on profound human values, in order to develop sustainable schools, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) offered a seven principle model for sustainable leadership: depth, endurance, breadth, justice, diversity, resourcefulness, conservation. Hargreaves (2009) refined this model adding three more principles: activist, vigilant and patience.

It is possible to group the principles within the revised model into two themes:

- Inclusive – socially inclusive and advocates diversity, seeking to collaborate with other organisations and create strategic alliance, rather than seek direct competition between schools. Comprehensive links can be made, therefore with other principles in this model such as: *Diversity, Justice, Activist* and *Vigilant*.
- Developmental – sustainable leadership permeates throughout the organisation, and through early identification of individual potential creates longevity. This is congruent with *Endurance, Breadth, Resourcefulness, Conservation* and *Patience*.

Collins and Porras (2005) suggest congruent ideas to those of Hargreaves and Fink (2006), and echoing the sentiments of Fullan (2004) in which

organisations who wish to be successful should put their moral purpose before profit. In the case of a primary school, moral purpose before efficiency, interschool competition and test outcomes; aims should include long-term goals being protected from the predation of change (in educational terms, changes imposed by government policy); success should commence slowly and progress with tenacity. Although demonstrably not compatible with successive inspection regimes and the current direction that state schooling has taken, successful schools should theoretically develop their own capacity for leadership from within the organisation, rather than introducing new people from outside; learning and growth should come from experimentation and innovation and not be limited to the standardised methods. How possible this is has yet to be explored but it could be argued that this is actually an impossible expectation given the constraints of the current system.

Davies (2009) developed a model for sustainable leadership, also based on moral purpose suggesting, like Hargreaves and Fink (2006) that there must be balance between short-term and long-term goals in order to achieve sustainability. Davis (2009) outlined the following as priorities: outcomes not just output; balancing short and long-term objectives; process not plans; passion; personal humility and professional will; strategic timing and strategic abandonment; building capacity and creating involvement; development of strategic measures of success; building in sustainability. The short-term role of a successful leadership team in either model is to convert the challenges of long-term objectives and external policy into actions, which can be effectively implemented.

One of the points in Davies' (2009) model which directly affects primary school Headteachers is "strategic abandonment," which, given the ever changing nature of education, is key when prioritising which actions are to be retained and which abandoned in order to create space for new ones. Whilst "strategic abandonment" is important in prioritisation, "strategic distribution", where tasks are distributed to middle and senior leaders are equally important in developing sustainability (NCSL, 2006). Knowing, when one is

new to the post or highly experienced, what to abandon and what to cling to, is an important judgement call and one that could be influenced by Hargreaves' (2009) 'vigilance' component as it is vital that Headteachers 'horizon scan' in order to ensure that their schools are informed about, and prepared for, changes in policy and the likely impact of those changes on them. Second-guessing policy makers and what they want and expect, however, has potentially added to the anxiety of both Headteachers and their staff over time, and contributed in fact to the recruitment crisis that it is meant to address.

An issue faced by Headteachers inherent within any of these models is that in a consumer led society, illustrated for example over the last decade by Ball (2008) and NAHT (2017), parents, the inspectorate, LAs and colleagues would be concerned if assertions about quality of provision were assuaged by the leadership team of a school suggesting a two or three year time scale, or maverick experimentation for excellence, or adherence to moral purpose above test scores because in a free market place, short-term results are the expectation, and if this is not met then custom is taken elsewhere. Essentially, it could be argued that Headteachers now operate on a similar system to that of football coaches, without the comparable investment of money.

There is also the reality that in a market-place, vulnerable schools cannot always act in an inclusive way, as they are trying to protect their interests, retain children and staff and be seen to be functioning effectively. For Headteachers, the maintenance of this imaginary is crucial to career survival as stated by Grant (2015), "Increased competition between neighbouring schools, the threat of forced academisation, and growing levels of personal accountability have increased the pressure on school leaders." (para. 12). Something that will be explored further when analysing the data in Chapter Five.

One of Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) principles, related to the active competition for children from neighbouring schools, is "justice". Schools that

are in affluent areas, and attract high attaining pupils are naturally more popular as they are placed further up league tables than schools that do not, based on data and Ofsted outcomes. Technically, however, schools have catchment areas from which they take on pupils, and as such this process is, theoretically, managed on behalf of the school by the LA, although some schools have developed unprincipled selection strategies of their own exposed in Millar (2017). Therefore, some schools can, as a result of several explicit and subversive policies including over subscription, perception of school not being able to accommodate needs and, policy on hair cut amongst others, make it difficult for parents to send their child there. Sometimes schools may refuse to take pupils; shamefully exclude pupils with behavioural needs, SEND, low attainment; and encourage parents to home educate, even if they are within catchment. The Fair Education Alliance (2017) suggest that in schools serving children of low income families, exclusions of any type are four times more likely than in those that do not. In a concerted bid to raise published standards, clearly at all costs, the hope is that schools will therefore become more popular than their neighbours, and still attract pupils from outside of its catchment area, who will be accepted as long as they fit spoken or unspoken criterion. Allen (2016) states something that professionals are aware of, yet lack the proof for: "Apocryphal tales of parents being 'encouraged' to take their children off-roll and educate them at home are widespread. But only rarely are accusations of malpractice designed to boost school performance proven." (para. 3). As funding is linked to pupils, more popular schools therefore have more money to spend. (Shepherd, 2013; Rogers, 2013; Mansell, 2017). This gives a financial imperative to schools who must employ amoral tactics to remain economically viable institutions. This is another example when the laudable aspiration to achieve sustainable leadership is afflicted by the discord between this and policy.

One practicable and valuable aspect of the model Hargreaves and Fink (2006) developed that supports the concept of sustainability of leadership within schools is 'depth'. In a complex environment such as a primary school, the idea that one visionary leader should or could control everything is

fallacious, as discussed earlier. Sustainable leadership in this sense is distributed leadership, which is both a precise portrayal of how much leadership is already demonstrated across a school and an aspiration that exemplifies what leadership can deliberately become. Viewed in terms of both development of serving Headteachers, and those who aspire, distributed leadership models across school systems can sustain, in addition to depend upon, the leadership of others.

When viewed in this sense, the notion that Headteachers could and should distribute leadership between themselves, to sustain them on an individual level, enable them to develop resilience, knowledge understanding and skills to remain in post, share innovation and ideas for how to protect themselves from the potentially predatory nature of neoliberal changes, and ensure that schools do not lose them to the burn out of leadership, resonates with the foundations of sustainable leadership. This is also exemplified by NCSL (2006); NFER, (2015) and NAHT, (2017). Ironically, it would seem that there is obvious discontinuity between the educational imaginary that schools perform within, which is at the whim of policy makers responsible for innovating the market agenda, and the evidence exemplified in several key pieces of research discussed above, over the last decade.

There are other models, with considerable similarities, that have been developed, such as Fullan's (2004) *Leadership and Sustainability* model and Hill's (2006) *Leadership That Lasts* model. The key similarities are the foundations of understanding of a moral aspect of leadership focused on holistic development and not singularly on performance indicators; the observation that balance between short and long-term objectives must be found; and the development of leadership at all levels of the school is vital. It appears then, that research on sustainable leadership in the last decade has indicated that holistic development and a moral compass are important, but neither of these elements feature in a neoliberal agenda and therefore this research has gone largely unnoticed by those who make policy.

Implications for primary education

The previous section looked at some of the suggestions presented by academics about the concept of sustainable leadership. In this section these ideas will be applied to primary school leadership, identifying whether any of the elements of existing models of sustainable leadership could be practically implemented.

Many of the ideas presented by all research in the area of leadership are applicable to all tiers of education, for example, the balance between short and long-term objectives is something which, regardless of the phase of education (EYFS, KS1, KS2), is going to be important in developing the vision and therefore the strategic planning of the organisation. There are some aspects that are possibly more applicable to the Headteacher, such as working closely with the governors (Hill, 2006).

Contrary to the component in Davies' (2009) model of 'justice', whereby schools do not poach the best pupils or staff from other institutions, is the current climate of financial efficiencies and, where competition for pupils is rife, this is compounded by the consumerism mentality in which parents expect the best, or they will take their custom (child) elsewhere. Pupils equate to funding, and good students equate to funding *and* improvement in rates of attainment, which are published and are linked to government targets.

What this illustrates is that the ideas of sustainable leadership promoted by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Hill (2006) and Davies (2009) appear to be contrary to government policy, which proposes a new managerial approach to leadership in education. This lack of continuity poses the most tangible challenge to primary school Headteachers: how are the values of sustainable leadership to be managed in cognisance with government policy?

There are, as discussed, great discontinuities between the underpinning, holistic ideologies of sustainable leadership and the differing realities faced by primary schools in the market-place; the possibilities of implementing

these proposals will be addressed in the forthcoming section. This could be attributed to values of sustainable leadership being resolutely about the authentic long-term development of staff and schools, which is not in harmony with the castigatory New Managerial educational landscape established by successive governments of the last 40 years. McBeath, Gronn, Opher, Lowden, Forde, Cowie, and O'Brien (2009) state that, "Multiple accountabilities, audits and reporting to a range of bodies were seen as primary factors in diverting heads from their valued priorities." (p. 5). Grant (2015) further exemplifies this very public and politicised lack of understanding with one example from Whitehall.

"In 2013, the then education secretary, Michael Gove, accused heads of being "critical but not constructive" at a conference when they voiced anguish about the culture of bullying and fear. He told them they could like it or lump it: "I thank you for your candour but if you don't like it, one of us will have to leave ..." It was Gove who left, but the combative approach remains." (para. 8)

NAHT (2015) state: "The language of criticism and failure deployed by successive governments is a serious deterrent to recruitment and retention". (p. 2). So is authentic leadership actually sustainable given this climate?

Leadership training

The shortage of suitably qualified and experienced Headteachers has been well documented over several decades as previously highlighted. In response, the government developed a national training programme. The NPQH, introduced in 1997, and made compulsory in 2009, by successive New Labour governments, was part of a drive to professionalise the role of headship and was designed to provide specific training for those wanting to become Headteachers. The idea to resolve the shortage through training, it could be argued, completely missed the point of what caused the recruitment situation, since the educational imaginary outlined in the previous chapter and earlier in this chapter, illustrates that due to policy implemented by Westminster and underpinned by market ideology, all Headteachers can do

in any situation is simply respond pragmatically, in the best way that they can.

Despite this, the DfES (2009) outlined the commitment of New Labour to increasing the skill set of prospective Headteachers by using the Education Act 2002 to mandate the requirement that all newly appointed Headteachers had to be in possession of, or in the process of completing, the NPQH. At that time, the course was fully funded and designed to provide a range of skills deemed a requirement in strategic leadership. Potential Headteachers had the opportunity to examine their leadership style, learn about textbook generalised challenges of headship, and through a range of learning experiences were able, in principle, to modify their leadership style before undertaking their first headship. As the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) presided over planning, delivering and evaluating the qualification process, it was inevitable that the training was limited to the parameters of government expectation rather than encouraging critical thinking, or engagement with myriad situations that pose real-life challenges to Headteachers from a sustainable leadership perspective, none of these can be quantified with ease and measured to pass or fail candidates, or judge them in their future role.

The recent coalition government, under Cameron, removed the mandatory requirement for Headteachers to undertake this training in 2012 and this marked the end for compulsory professional training for Headteachers *per se* (and the NCSL, who met their demise in 2017) and in true neoliberal style left it to the individual, and, or, the school to choose whether they required a business leader, or an educationalist to lead the school and, whether a professional qualification was even required. The outcome of this is that the pattern of engagement in this programme has been variable across the country. It was, and is, incumbent upon existing Headteachers, and school governors, to choose to allocate funding from budgets already under pressure to allow prospective leaders to complete NPQH or facilitate some sort of training on the job, knowing that they are likely to leave and pursue the headship elsewhere. NCSL (2006) discussed this and found, “It is a very

altruistic system – schools and LEAs have willingly developed teachers knowing that they are likely, indeed encouraged to move to another school or LEA. Collaboration between schools has prevailed, rather than competition.” (p.40); as did the NAHT (2015) “The market failure in the development of senior leaders, especially Headteachers, is the school that benefits from their professional development is often not the school that pays for it.” (p.2). This moral dilemma is ever present, as discussed in the previous chapter, and is directly affected by market forces.

Developing distributed leadership, whereby initiatives can be distributed to staff within the school who are empowered to make decisions and be accountable for those decisions, as discussed earlier, is endemic in primary schools now. This has two clear advantages: it enables a number of projects to simultaneously run, developing leadership and management skills which may manifest in increased capacity; and literally sharing out some of the myriad tasks which now befall the Headteacher, which may involve less pressure for them and potentially keep them in the job. There is, naturally, a third inferred benefit: one of Ofsted’s measures when inspecting schools is their capacity for improvement and distributed leadership.

Governance at all levels, from Whitehall to school governing bodies, demonstrates that many schools, appear to have lost sight of the evolving social, national and local contexts in which education is situated. The current educational imaginary seeks to serve and gratify very narrow numerical definitions of success and produce citizens who will work and generate economic success for the elite in the country.

Despite a teaching qualification no longer being a pre-requisite for headship, having usually been through the teaching profession and gained significant experience, most Headteachers understand that nurturing staff and sharing difficult experiences helps not just the Headteacher problem solve, but also develops awareness and skill in the staff who share. Former SoS for Education for the coalition government, Justine Greening, outlined her support of distributed leadership on a formal level (Greening, 2017), but

formal leadership development is just one aspect which essentially needs to be part of a wider strategic approach to developing future leadership capacity, aptitude in newly qualified leaders and that of more experienced leaders as they move school or face contemporary challenges posed by policy impact on social services, healthcare and education.

With the backdrop of ever-decreasing budgets and ever increasing accountability, measured by testing, formal professional development has become a contentious area for schools both in subject, and also in leadership, specific fields. Therefore, sharing the expertise of more experienced staff and being offered on the job opportunity to develop is crucial.

“I want to stress that...I believe that the real key to improvement ... will be to invest in the great home-grown teaching talent that is often already there...So it’s about ... committing to the highest-quality CPD throughout a teacher’s career”, (Greening, 2017, para. 63).

Whilst there is no disagreement about the sentiment, and there are innumerable companies offering professional training and support, the reality is that there is no CPD specific to the role of the Headteacher on offer, and little money available if there were. Pain (2017) states that the time has come for “...school leaders to really seize the narrative and the agenda here – this is the difference between ‘effective leadership’ (great for serving a system) and transformational leadership amongst this generation of school leaders.” (para. 6). But I would argue that this is easier said than done with financial constraints and workload barriers.

Schools are under immense and relentless pressure to perform. There is a recruitment and retention crisis for teachers and this has an impact on the number of professionals choosing to become Deputy Headteachers and Headteachers (NCSL, 2006; HC, 2017; NAHT, 2017), especially true in challenging schools. There is very little money for training due to budget cuts; there is little time in the teaching week for staff to be out of school when high stakes testing is privileged over professional development (HC, 2017);

but schools need Headteachers to perform their duties and the discourse around leadership is that to be transformational you need to make a difference and be innovative, whilst simultaneously being under pressure from the neoliberal schema.

“The emotional toll of dealing with challenging behaviour from vulnerable children, and sometimes staff, was vast. And I felt alone. It is difficult to show any vulnerability when – as a result of the “accountability” culture – your every word is interpreted and translated into the language of either “capable” or “incapable” (Grant, 2015, para. 4).

It is from this perspective that this research examines the notion of sustainability as it relates directly to primary schools.

Training for teachers, as established by the House of Commons Select Committee, HCSC, (2017) is concentrated in their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) phase, there is no mention of specific training for Headteachers. Whilst this report advocates that continuing professional development (CPD) should naturally follow on from ITT to enable improvement over time in practice, it acknowledges that, whilst desirable, the reality is that there is no entitlement to CPD in England, we actually have a weaker commitment to CPD than many countries perceived as high-performing. They also suggest that there are a number of barriers preventing CPD taking place including time and accountability constraints. This is no different for Headteachers, and yet the HCSC (2017) states that, “CPD improves teaching practice, professionalism, and can help improve teacher retention.” (p. 24). It could be argued that whilst knowing what would help recruitment and retention and therefore sustainable leadership, policy makers are unable, or reluctant to take action, presumably because this would change the focus from efficiency to investment of more money into education.

The CPD for teachers is specific to initiatives for subjects, classroom management, special educational needs, and safeguarding, as these form the majority of the work done by teachers, and much of it is quantifiable in terms of output in children’s attainment. The natural correlation made by

neoliberal ideology is that if teachers have accessed good training in areas that the government feel important and done their job properly then all children will also have had the important information of the day disseminated to them and be able to produce it in tests as a safeguard. Prospective leaders may be coached by more experienced leaders in school, or develop skills on subject leadership courses, if funding, time and internal dynamics allow. There is to date no specific training, mandatory or available in the private sector, for Headteachers who wish to develop skill in their role in school. It is the conjecture of this research that this is because of the innumerable complexities of the daily job of a primary school Headteacher and the unique cumulative pressures that this brings; simply transferring business applications of management training are not enough, nor are simply the supervision models of social care. Grant (2015) suggests that,

“What’s needed is emotional support and a space for Headteachers to reflect on how well they are doing the job and what they could do better...In the absence of such support, heads wear a mask to give the impression that they are coping. Sometimes this means they can turn into a bit of an automaton: always giving, coping, running on autopilot.” (para. 10).

It appears that there may be a gap in the training and little research on what training would be effective to support this development, and the potential to plug that gap, and ensure retention of Headteachers, is where the concept of coaching and mentoring and hence the programme Headspace is situated.

The call for coaching and mentoring

It is clear from a range of research, which will now be examined below, much of which encompasses the view of serving and retired Headteachers, that there is value in coaching and mentoring for supporting all staff, but in particular Headteachers, at all stages in their role. “...mentoring plays a vital role, particularly during the first year when Headteachers want help and advice” (NCSL, 2004, p.3) with another suggestion of an “increased focus on formal or informal coaching and mentoring programmes”. (NCSL, 2006, p.13). “There also needs to be ... mentoring and coaching that is delivered by

experienced practitioners”. (NAHT, 2015, p. 2). The NCSL found that the more progressive organisations acknowledge the value of personal development as a retention instrument, hoping possibly that teaching would be considered progressive and an investment made into retention – this did not happen.

Harris and Muijs (2002) suggest that developing high quality leadership is premised upon the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth. One of the three main activities they believe will support improved educational practice is through coaching, mentoring and leading working groups.

“New Heads should have access to formal induction. Leaders need practical and emotional support, as well as opportunities for peer support (such as coaching, mentoring and shadowing).” (NFER, 2017, p. 2). This resonates with the view of Grant (2015) and McBeath et al. (2009).

When comparing leadership in a range of organisations, NCSL (2016) discovered that feedback, coaching, mentoring showed significant developmental potential. These findings were built upon those by McCall (1998) in which positively transformational leadership experiences were sorted into four groups: workplace assignments; collaborating with experienced staff; enduring hardship and setbacks and therefore building resilience; and ‘other’ which included programmes and experiences outside of the workplace such as coaching.

“Multiple Headteachers – some who are happy in the role and others who are considering leaving or have left – felt that there should be more support and induction for new Headteachers, including opportunities for mentoring and coaching. There needs to be a much clearer system of mentoring and coaching and induction for any Headteacher who is new to post or new to any school in a different authority or context.” (NFER, 2017, p. 30).

This was mooted in Scotland by a report commissioned for the Scottish government by McBeath et al. (2009). “The support of coaches and mentors, where available, and the quality of mediation and support

offered...were especially important for Headteachers.” (p. 10), presumably as the report identified that there were several reasons why this support may be required, stating that headship was, “emotional work” clearly merited by responses of ... “fire fighting”, “battles”, “murder”, “ground down”, “frazzled”, “crumbling”, “washed out”, “being hammered”, “getting kicked”, “sucking people dry”. (ibid. p. 4).

Whilst it must be acknowledged that Headteachers who are confident in themselves and their role may seem more proactive at seeking support, others may find it hard to ask fearing that it will show ‘vulnerability’. (NFER, 2017, p. 30) That same fear is communicated by Grant (2015), an advocate of coaching for Headteachers, “I felt alone. It is difficult to show any vulnerability when – as a result of the ‘accountability’ culture – your every word is interpreted and translated into the language of either ‘capable’ or ‘incapable’...” (para. 4)

Oliver and Vincent (2000) completed a survey of 60 UK companies attempting to ascertain the most effective ways of developing people at work. Their findings showed that in addition to projects in the workplace and internal training, coaching was in the top three most successful strategies, so it has long been known that coaching is not restricted to one field, but has applications to multiple areas.

Coaching, when directly related to problems that have arisen in work, removes the issue of transference of knowledge and assimilation of skills, and done effectively it does not require major investments in training or blocks of time away from work where other people would be required to step in and cover. As with any CPD, there are issues about how effective coaching is, (NCSL, 2006) but Fullan (2003) makes an interesting observations which taken in conjunction with the issue of effective coaching could provide a solution in that he believes that learning with other leaders, both inside and outside school would create an excellent climate for learning in leadership.

“Headspace”

The Headspace programme originated from a Positive Workplace survey carried out by Worklife Support in 1999. The data provided from this quickly revealed the isolation that Headteachers felt, discussed in the previous section, which led to the creation of a coaching and mentoring programme designed specifically for these Headteachers by Jenny Blount. Blount, Head of Learning & Development at Worklife Support, designed the programme to support Headteachers at a time of unparalleled change, and this change agenda has not abated in the years since establishment of the programme.

Currently there are 41 Headspace and Yourspace programmes running across the country. Many are very small, with less than seven people on the programme, whilst 29 are groups that have elected to continue. One group is into its eighth year. Sue Hugo, who is in charge of Headspace nationally, was unable to calculate how many people have used Headspace over the last 17 years since its inception, but did estimate that it is in the thousands.

However, it is currently proving more difficult to recruit on new courses, which according to Sue Hugo, may be attributable to two reasons: the demise of the LAs, thereby the loss of a direct route to large numbers of Headteachers and direct funding for the course; and cuts to school budgets making some Headteachers feel that they cannot justify the expense from school being used on themselves, as discussed in both this and the previous chapter.

There are a range of approaches used by the different facilitators. Some are trained coaches and tend, therefore, to use a more coaching based approach of 'solutions focus', others like to use frameworks and agree on topics or discussion subjects with their groups. Others do virtually nothing at all except *hold the space*. However, according to Sue Hugo, feedback from evaluations from all groups is extremely positive, which is reflected in the number of continuation groups, such as the one in this study.

As the Wellbeing Coordinator for Suffolk, Philip Illsley has been involved in Headspace for over five years. He stated that Suffolk LA's initial interest in Headspace was their desire to "support their Heads with a professional and personal development programme which went beyond simply meeting their duty of care. They were keen also to put something in place that would support existing retention initiatives." (Worklife Support, 2017, p. 2). This is congruent with the approach of the LA in which I currently work and it is their subscription to Headspace that has facilitated this research, which will be discussed in the data chapter of this thesis.

Conclusion

What has been discussed in this chapter is that it would be desirable to have a framework for sustainable leadership within primary education and that existing models such as those of Hargreaves (2009) or Davies (2009), could be appropriate if it was not for the impact of, and the discontinuity created by, New Managerialism enforced by successive governments and by the construction of a free market. It is, therefore, questionable whether sustainable leadership is possible when viewed as the holistic undertaking these models suggest. Leadership, it could be argued, is sustainable if you can have access to coaching and collaboration as part of your routine work in order to build reliance and skill.

Whilst the pressures that schools are working under may mean that there is no long-term and sustainable model that guarantees that schools as a whole can be managed at a national level, what has tentatively been proposed in this chapter is a more pragmatic reaction to more or less impossible conditions. The inclusion of a coaching model for CPD for Headteachers, within a framework of sustainable leadership, which takes some of the transferable aspects from established theories discussed, combined with some bespoke modifications specific to the primary school setting, could address some of the recruitment and retention issues faced. This could

address the shortage of individuals seeking headship by creating a culture conducive to authentic leadership through social inclusivity.

Symptomatic of the fact that sustainable leadership is a relatively new concept, there is little empirical evidence surrounding its implementation, but this chapter suggests that this approach to sustainability of leadership within primary schools, by developing a culture of leadership from deep within the organisation simultaneously allowing Headteachers the time to share their leadership with each other through coaching could be advantageous to the individuals involved as they develop the skills necessary for resilience. Perhaps by implementing sustainable leadership principles there could be a positive benefit to the individuals seeking headship as they attempt to successfully navigate the challenges of the new managerialist educational landscape.

If sustainable leadership is to have any observable impact on a school, it requires a commitment from all staff to create a culture in which skills, and particularly leadership skills, can be developed. This inevitably will provide the requisite internal stability should key posts within the school become vacant, particularly given the average teaching staff numbers in primary schools, whilst simultaneously developing resilience and capacity so that there is a greater pool of potential candidates for future leadership positions.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to understand the extent to which a structured programme of peer coaching supports newly appointed primary school Headteachers to develop their skill, knowledge and understanding of the role, in addition to resilience and, as a result, likelihood to remain in post.

Research narrative

I was appointed to my first headship in January 2013 and became part of the Headspace group studied in this research from its inception in September 2013. The group was assembled on the single criteria that the participants were newly appointed Headteachers in the previous academic year and therefore invited to join. My understanding is that everyone invited (both on this and other Headspace courses) attended at least for the funded sessions of the first two years. Once the group became self-funding, and self-lead, with each colleague taking a turn at bringing new research, current challenges and legislation to the sessions for discussion, colleagues began to leave the group over a period of 3 years. I developed a relationship with the members of the group over a four-year period prior to the commencement of data collection, and remain an active member of the group, the data collection having been completed.

During the time that this Headspace group worked together, several members left the group, for a number of reasons including (although not exhaustively): the sense that they did not need the support as they felt that they experienced no issues in their school; their school was in a good or outstanding Ofsted category and they had no concerns about how their school was lead; they could not afford to pay for the facilitation of the sessions from the school budget as they were facing deficit (when jobs are at stake, the wellbeing of the Head takes less priority); they left headship completely; their school faced so many issues on a daily basis that they felt that they could not be out of school, thereby leaving colleagues to deal with

myriad issues whilst they indulged themselves in reflection and wellbeing time. It is possible that there were other reasons, personality clashes with members of the group, for example, which were not shared and that excuses were made rather than explain this.

I did also consider, upon hearing and reflecting on the transcripts, that many of those who remained in the group may have felt a keen sense that education should be more of a social enterprise than it was perceived that it had become, and that working together to solve problems could mean that they could be perhaps more revolutionary. I did speculate whether one of the reasons the members of this group remained in the group was their shared sense of negative views about education, but much of the content of our meetings was about how passionate the participants were about ensuring that even the most disadvantaged children accessed education and how the system needed changing, rather than unfounded negativity about it as a concept. In addition, not all members agreed with this view, and in terms of the role of the Headteacher, there were some differences of opinion.

Throughout the sessions, spanning six years, I would participate in discussion where I felt I had strong views, or indeed when the taught elements of the doctoral course offered some framework for understanding that had helped me in my role and I wished to share this, but equally, I was prepared to listen and at times modify my views based on the alternative experiences of colleagues. I had my personal drive for education and also my experiential development through my role and that collective experience gained through the Headspace group that informed my thinking, and as such, I developed into a pragmatic thinker.

A growing awareness and unease grew among members of the group, potentially as a result of the changes in group dynamics and participants, but also perhaps in relation to the increasing issues that individuals were dealing with, which they verbalised regularly. In addition, the collective understanding of the nature of the role of headship, their preparedness for it, their support to

perform well and be perceived as doing so, were in conflict with their lived experience of it.

This privileged access to information, shared through the formal coaching sessions implemented in the first two years, self-governed sessions of the third and fourth years, about the most contentious issues facing Headteachers enabled an appreciation of policy impact, institutional background and community differences. Therefore, the idea to focus upon this element of education through doctoral research was discussed by the group during one of the regular sessions in order to try to bring a sense of understanding to the complexities experienced, as alluded to by McNeill and Chapman (2005).

The main body of data was collected through a series of six focus groups, with a cohort of eight Headspace participants, and formed part of the timetabled sessions already established. These were recorded and subsequently transcribed. This was followed by a set of interviews with both the facilitator of the first two years of the programme for this cohort, and the two successive individuals who had procured the programme on behalf of the LA.

As the researcher, I was positioned within the group, with privileged access to knowledge and information which otherwise would not be made publicly available, this presented several ethical issues, explored in this chapter, which establish the parameters for the fieldwork, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions which govern the methodology chosen.

Methodology

As a Headteacher undertaking research within my own local and professional community, the research is by nature participatory and ethnographic. I both position myself within the research as a participant and make explicit my subjective stance so therefore the research is reflexive.

Participatory research

Whilst the concept of research on disempowered groups, explored by those such as Friere (1972) and Giroux (1989), is highly contested, it is the advocacy within participatory research that underpins the main form of data collection in this research. In this method, the group itself attempts to establish interventions to revolutionise, develop and enhance their professional and private lives.

As is the case with this study, participatory research is founded on the view that research can be conducted by every day people rather than an elite group of researchers (Pinto, 2000), it is therefore divergent from conventional methods of constructing research as it is overwhelmingly democratic. McTaggart (1989) suggests that there are 16 strands of participatory research, many of which are relevant but the following are most pertinent in that this research: seeks to improve social practice, is collaborative, authentic, critical and political.

This study was not commissioned by a large corporation, or the government; it has its origins in a desire to open up, or expose, the experiences of those who attempt to lead primary schools, in a way that could potentially ensure that the future Headteachers of primary schools are given the tools that they may need to effectively perform their role, or to expose to policy makers that the role in its current iteration is untenable. The emphasis is on the power between researcher and researched as shared and equal (Tonden, 2005), and inherent within it is the notion that "...the researcher shares his or her humanity with the participants" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.37). This, of course, is self-evident within the relationships already established within the group.

Campbell (2002) suggests that participatory research is "emancipatory" (p. 20). Similar to mixed methods research, it is both eclectic and pragmatic assuming whatever research methodology will deliver the data to enable

action; if necessary rigorous control can be surrendered for the sake of “pragmatic utility”, (Brown, 2005a, p. 92). The focus of participatory research, as in this case, is not on obtaining an absolute ‘truth’ but on improved understanding and well being of participants in their microenvironment.

As a collective, the indigenous knowledge of members of the focus group in participatory research is legitimised, therefore gaining respect as there is no mantle of the researcher as authority. Participants become “...active and powerful in the research rather than passive subjects”. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 38). Recognising the centrality of power in both research and also every day life, participant research does not just allow equal distribution of power, it expounds an explicit agenda of seizing power from the elite and returning it to the populace. Participatory research in this case ensured that participants were not regarded as simply sources of information but “participants in their own community development.” (Hall, 2005, p.13).

Participants in this research were asked to consider the likely responses of those who may read it, as conducting this type of powerfully political research has the potential to disturb existing power relations in both the workplace and society. As can be seen from the data, and alluded to previously, some sections of discussion were redacted from the recording as a result of anxieties around the political implications on individuals. It was important at times to discuss on the day, prior to recording taking place, that conversation about politically sensitive information would be done either during the recording if it came up (and be omitted from the transcripts) or after the general discussion had taken place to ensure that each participant felt safe and able to embrace the topics discussed fully without fear of recrimination. I had to be clear in my analysis which information was redacted and why in each transcript, and as part of considering whether the discussions were synonymous with wider educational issues that several Headteachers and schools faced, or simply a result of a particular set of circumstances, remove the emotiveness of those sessions as a filter for objectivity.

Participatory research is not without its critics, for example, Brown (2005b) argues that participatory action research can lack focus and be ambiguous about objectives; be vague about relationships between researcher and participants; be imprecise about methods and technologies that it employs; and unclear about the outcomes of the research.

For the purposes of this research, I was very focused on attempting to establish how the Headspace programme supported those new to the role that I myself had undertaken. I wanted to try to understand why it had proven helpful to me and why I chose to commit time and school money to retaining it as part of my external support network, when others felt it was not as important. I wanted to know what my colleagues wrestled with in their role which caused them consternation and which they needed support in order to deal with. I wanted to learn more about the role of a primary school Headteacher, and its complexity in the state sector. I have been clear about my relationship with the participants, we were a group of professionals, randomly placed together as part of a support package offered by our LA for new Headteachers. None of us knew each other before and none of us see each other outside of those meetings in a social context. We met every half term for four years prior to the commencement of the data collection and six times for the data collection sessions.

Whilst Brown (2005b) has valid concerns for the effectiveness of participatory research, it is the attention to individual and collective agency and voice, respect for the indigenous knowledge, and otherwise unheard voices that will be allowed to be heard through the data collected and in the analysis section of the following chapter.

Ethnography

As a serving Headteacher, and participant in the Headspace programme for over four years with the same group of Headteachers who form part of the research group, I was immersed in the educational experience collectively shared with the focus group - inhabiting the same 'world', subscribing to the

same code of conduct, national and LA rules and affected by the same political issues. As such, it would be difficult for me to extricate myself from this world and attempt to investigate the impact of such a programme, with objectivity without reflexivity.

In order to recognise and develop awareness of my place in the social structure of our group, I took great care to examine all of the assumptions I made throughout our recorded conversations and indeed beyond those to what underpinned them – as, for example, my own personal experiences as discussed at length in the introduction. This examination took place as a conscious action at the time and also upon reflection when transcribing and analysing the transcripts. The reflexive analysis, deciding what to privilege and what was significant, took place with the support and rigorous academic discussion of my supervisor. It was through these sessions that I could expose my own nuanced views and hold them up for examination as part of the collective views. My supervisor was aware of the challenges that I have faced as a Headteacher, and we discussed the strain this placed on my personal conceptualisation of education and how it may have manifested in, and potentially manipulated the discussions.

There were times during the recorded conversations that participants surprised me with their views, this had, however, happened previously throughout our many sessions, and various members of the group had expressed surprise at different times. The precedent, therefore, for individuality and freedom of speech had been set much earlier than the times when sessions were recorded. Examining my own initial responses to the views and narratives of the participants during the analysis stage gave me the opportunity to develop a more objective and critical distance, as I was able to assimilate aspects of their lives and experiences, that I was privileged to as a result of our previous years together as group members.

Ethnography is a research technique usually deployed to study human social phenomena and communities, (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As an ethnographic study, there are inherent difficulties associated in terms of validity and reliability (Delamont, 2002; McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Denizen and Lincoln, 2008), many of which I tried to mitigate through reflexive analysis described in the next chapter.

One of the main advantage that I encountered with this particular ethnographic study is that it raised, identified and helped to analyse unexpected topics that a structured questionnaire could not have predicted and explored. This happened because either I, as participant researcher, or others in the group, asked for clarification or exemplification of unexpected issues raised. Another benefit to the approach taken was that I elicited both a detailed and, what I understood to be, dependable representation of participants' attitudes and beliefs as they were repeated over several sessions over several years; were rooted prior to the study in an agreed format with agreed rules designed to protect the participants and their views; and those left in the group by the time the study took part all had strong personalities and an overt understanding that the majority of the content of our conversations would be published. It is, however, subjective in nature, but with the support and guidance of my supervisor I felt that I was able to expose and analyse relevant participant attitudes and emotions in relation to their role and the purpose of the research.

Ethnographic studies do not always require a long period of time. It is an embedded research technique, in the sense that it takes account of the context within which the observations are made, and seeks to understand actions, practices, beliefs and interactions as being integral to that context. Therefore, it is possible that had this study been conducted at the outset of the Headspace group being established, the participants may not have acted naturally due to lack of trust and a degree of social anxiety. The length of time that the group had been working together, and the cohesion evident in the group that had survived into the beginning of the data gathering of this research, indicated that the participants trusted both me,

and one another.

Reflexivity

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) suggest that how reflexivity is addressed is crucial. They state that validity is key, justification for the conclusions drawn must reside in the “evidence” collected (p. 23). This will become evident in the analysis and discussion of data in the following chapter.

The complexity of reflexivity lies in the fact that, as participant researcher, one must demonstrate both relative subjectivity and also objectivity because one is part of the social construct being studied, (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.14).

However, rather than considering participation as a restriction to overcome, it strengthens this research “by promoting more penetratingly vigilant attention, more subtle awareness, and keener sensitivity” to the complexity of the role and issues faced (Shusterman, 2008, p. 138). Furthermore, Hall (1996) suggests that the perspective of the researcher, despite its potential to be loaded with theory, does not hold precedence over the views of the participants; advocating that reflexivity is a vital constituent in, and an epistemological origin of, participant research because it takes the stance that the creation of knowledge, in which data is real and exposes the experiences of all participants in a democratic basis, is a social construct as is the case in this research.

Self conscious awareness of the effect of myself as researcher participant, as well as practitioner, on the research process and how my innate values perceptions and opinions are absorbed into the conditions of the data collection are what is central in the concept of reflexivity as exemplified in this study. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 359).

Bourdieu, (2004b) suggests that within education a move towards a more reflexive methodological approach, with recognition of the centralised

position of the researcher within the field would give more credence and validity to objective data.

Despite employing the above approaches, it is not claimed that a complete understanding of how research was affected by me as the participant researcher has been reached, nor that the limitations of this study have been completely overcome – simply that an authentic attempt has been made at negotiating inevitably complex encounters in order to effect a trustworthy account of the views of the participants. I did this through active discussion with my supervisor when analysing the data and serious consideration of the topics raised by the participants and the views that they expressed, which I attempted to group according to overarching national issues at times, related to the content of the literature review chapters, or simply as they repeatedly came up across several conversations and in different contexts. In understanding the context, including the professional, personal and institutional sensitivities and dynamics through the ethnographic process, I was able to make informed judgements about the data that you gathered.

The design of this research encapsulates practices traditionally identified with qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups. Whilst it could be argued that these terms are presumptive and unhelpful, as they suggest that certain instruments will be used to collect specific types of data; this research proposes that they are the most appropriate methods in order to respond to the subsidiary research questions, and therefore answer the main research question.

Ethical Issues

McNeill and Chapman (2005) exemplify the obligations of the researcher, both to participants and also to the research. It is important that, particularly in this study, the researcher mitigated for career threat and also put measures in place to ensure that individuals were not exposed to harm through individual identification.

All research participants gave informed consent after being informed in writing what the research framework was and given the option to refuse to participate, or once within the data collection phase, ask for the recorder to be switched off if they were discussing something too sensitive and/or ask for certain things to be redacted. The researcher explained in writing about the purpose of the research. Relationships within the focus groups as ethnographic research was taking place, were not generated to gain trust or information, relationships and information sharing happened prior to the research taking place and the research was a natural extension of this process once informed consent was gained.

There are micro-political reasons for the association of participant research with those who are disempowered. Powerful institutions, for example the government or LA are usually disinclined towards the ethnographer, "on their guard against unfriendly and unsympathetic investigation" (Smith and White, 1968, p. 153). It is expected that they would be more amenable to publicising research into the uncomfortable activities of grouping of individuals, such as Headteachers, who may wish to undermine the agency and legitimacy of the existing neoliberal milieu. Therefore, confidentiality was protected as far as possible by masking the identity of the participants in transcripts, however, anyone working in the LA reading the research will know the members of the group who have participated, as the researcher is embedded within that group. There is the potential that this limited the depth of the discussion, however, acknowledging when to turn off the recorder and an agreement on redacted sections should have mitigated for this. Whilst it is highly unlikely in this research that physical harm or criminal activity should take place or be revealed, the element of safeguarding in this instance was acknowledged.

Whilst sociological research is intrusive by its very nature (McNeill and Chapman, 2005) there are a number of guidelines, which the British Education Research Association (2011) stipulate as principles, that should inform any educational research and this research has adhered to them fully. As ethical approval was successfully gained, it is hoped that through careful

attention to detail there will be no ethical issues arising from the research or its delivery of findings.

Methods

Focus group participation

The methodological origins of participant observation are difficult to define. Driven by Malinowski's (1926) statement that the researcher "relinquish his comfortable position on the verandah," (p. 146) to ascertain exactly what is occurring in unseen communities such as Headteacher support meetings, there may be an expectation that an empathetic presentation of these arcane groups, will be made. Certainly, this was a very real consideration, how to be authentic and analytical, whilst preserving the relationship between researcher and wider group and that of group member and employers. Preserving Weber's system of *verstehen*, Becker (1967) notes for example that the participant observer conducting research in a prison must observe "through the eyes of the inmates and not through the eyes of the guards or other involved parties." (p. 247) Whilst Lindeman (1924), recommended that participant observation by a legitimate insider, provided a clear research advantage in disclosing the sub-society's nature. In the case of this research, being a bona-fide member of the group meant that the nuances of what was said and how, the contexts discussed and discontinuities raised could be advantageous in unveiling profound and otherwise esoteric perceptions of the educational imaginary.

Focus groups were privileged over interviews originally as they are inherently less formal and easier to organise, in this context. Attempting to organise individual interviews with up to eight Headteachers who participate in the Headspace programme would have been too time consuming and been in addition to the work of the Headteachers, which would have been an imposition, therefore, focus groups as part of a pre-established meeting schedule ensured that minimal disruption and inconvenience was caused. Also, there is a great deal of professional dialogue, discussion, challenge,

and assimilation of information that takes place as part of the routine group sessions that would have been lost had individual interviews been conducted. Indeed, as the recordings of the sessions were a routine part of the usual sessions themselves, authentic data was gathered and rich information sharing experiences were captured because none of the members felt the Dictaphone was a physical barrier.

According to Robson (2002) there are several advantages to using focus groups. In this instance, the group had established solid professional relationships and a basis of trust, therefore there was an intrinsic ability between the participants to corroborate views, exemplify ideas, challenge opinion and enrich the data collected. Whilst it is apropos to point out that one disadvantage may be the impossibility to generalise so easily from a focus group, particularly one as small and well established as this, the dynamics of the group, and their role at the thin end of the leadership wedge, should, and did, facilitate the rapid surfacing of the most dominant national education and leadership topics allowing for the discussions to formulate naturally into themes. In such situations, it is expected that there may evolve stronger personalities which may have a negative impact, and whilst there are naturally more vocal members of the group, all members are familiar with working together in such a way and have therefore long overcome this as a potential negative barrier.

The participant observation method of this research is broadly similar to that of Giullianotti (1995) who studied football hooligans from within; Hobbs (1990) who studied criminals in London's East End; Armstrong, (1993) who studied Sheffield United football hooligans; and Westmarland (2001) who studied police violence which were all facilitated by established association with and uninhibited access of the researcher to the designated environment.

Axiomatically, conducting participant observation exposes the researcher to numerous professional dilemmas, which must be negotiated prior to data collection commencement and renegotiated almost during data collection in relation to the habitus of the subculture under study. The main dilemmas

related to the following: safeguarding issues, had a Headteacher expressed concerns during sessions about either the safety of a child or colleague in their care or themselves then there would have been some action required outside of the confines of this research; employment security, all Headteachers were naturally concerned that our open conversations and the level of trust that we shared could not be compromised if, as part of what was written and shared within this research, their job could be lost. For that reason, any potentially harmful element of the recording was redacted in the transcript. A secondary vulnerability faced by the participant observer is the authority and control that those in the group to be studied may seek to have on the conclusions drawn, particularly in such a closely woven group.

In determining the questions to be used in the focus group meeting it was important that sufficient questions were asked in order to answer the research questions; whilst the initial questions were based on the pilot, other questions evolved following the previous session and were based on key themes emerging from the literature and the sessions as appropriate.

It was possible to collect all of the rich data required using the customary series of focus groups, with researcher as participant, as these had the benefit of being able to obtain detailed responses to questions. Since the nature of the group dynamic was such that the Headteachers met on a purely voluntary basis and at regular, pre-agreed times and dates, the difficulty of gathering such a group to all meet at the same time and engage in discussion was mitigated. Pettigrew (1992) points out, access is often difficult when working with and researching leaders. However, as there is both a personal relationship already established between members of the Headspace group being studied, and a professional framework for the focus groups resulting from the nature of the programme, this issue was alleviated. Nonetheless, whilst the issue of access was mitigated, potentially the research is open to criticism regarding the robustness of the sampling instrument, representativeness and notions of bias. An ethnographic, reflexive approach to analysis will allow for critical reflection of the formative data gathered (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Interview

One interview was conducted with a group comprising of the facilitator of the structured element of the programme and the two members of CWAC who procured the training on behalf of the local authority, in two sittings, following the completion of the focus group sessions.

Freebody (2004) suggests that the interviewer's management and analysis of the interviews affect the credibility of the findings. Oppenheim (1992) suggests that interviewers require inherent higher order interpersonal skills to facilitate effective interviews in which any bias is avoided, leading questions are not asked and empathy and respect are shown. Silverman (2005) expands upon these points by also suggesting that those interpersonal skills also include non-verbal queues such as: facial expressions, eye contact and head nodding to prevent misunderstandings. I have both a professional relationship and a limited personal relationship with the two LA chair people, and a professional relationship with the facilitator spanning over two years. It is possible that the level of interaction between me as researcher and the members of the group had enabled the members to elicit non-verbal messages where none were intended. It is also possible that knowing that the research may be read by members of the LA who agree funding for the programme in the initial two years of headship, the questions may have been answered in such a way as to be overly positive regardless of the predisposition towards the researcher.

Conclusion

This data, obtained from current participants in the Headspace programme provided a valuable insight into the tangible support that it offered and may, therefore, support those individuals from further afield who are newly appointed to primary headship in developing the resilience and range of necessary skills required to succeed in their role. This will be further discussed in the analysis section of the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Results and Analysis

This chapter presents the data gathered in two sections:

The first is a reflexive analysis, which acknowledges that whilst disaggregating data such as this into themes is subjective and difficult, it has allowed me to explore the unexplored from an ethnographic, participant perspective; thereby exposing what I understand to be the unstable, bizarre and illogical aspects of the Kafkaesque world of headship (Kafka, 2014), in which the discontinuities discussed earlier in this thesis are exemplified within the transcriptions of the 6 Headspace meetings.

The metaphor of 'exposure', though in fact the ubiquitous experience of those working in education, permits the anonymous revelations of the Headteachers within the group; exposing what cannot be made public, cannot be legitimised and cannot be made official, therefore sustaining the illusion that the current educational proposition is tenable. What I think this research demonstrates is the extent to which it is only tenable because it is supported by the secrecy inherent within the expectations and nature of the role of Headteacher.

If the experiences contained within this data were to be made public, the reality of the role and its inherent major difficulties would be made public also and other Headteachers may come forward in support. This could create instability in the educational status quo; perhaps other Headteachers would seize it as a clarion call and therefore the educational imaginary would become unsustainable and insecure. Unless this happens, the educational machine in its current configuration can continue; if exposed, and with the weight of public sympathy and opinion behind Headteachers, education would not be able to function in the same way.

The way that education is managed, through instruments such as Ofsted for example, makes it unconscionable that the things discussed within the data could be in the public domain as part of recognised and official discourse.

What I have tried to do is expose this, and will exemplify further throughout the discussion below. It was impractical to include the transcripts of eight hours of discussion in their entirety, but I would urge the reader to read this analysis alongside the complete transcripts found in Appendix A.

The second is a critical analysis of the themes disgorged by the reflexive analysis and explored by several key thinkers on the topic of power: Debord, Baudrillard, Marx, Foucault, and Bourdieu. Primarily this section examines the notion of power and how it is manifest in what I understand as an educational Lacanian 'imaginary'. In doing so, I will also explore how the mechanisms of the capitalist state have become absorbed, and internalised, understood and contested by individuals; how what is real is superseded by the hyper-real.

As a result of the invitation for open sharing in a group discussion, extrapolating themes became more challenging, but also more varied. Headspace, it would appear, has several immediate benefits to the participants that counteract the influences of a neoliberal educational imaginary as illustrated in Chapter Two.

Some of the language used in this and other sections of my thesis is both passionate and dramatic, illustrated by what could appear to be dramatic analogy and metaphor of renowned thinkers. I think it is important to explain the reasons for this. The situation that all of the heads who were part of the support group constantly found themselves in was one of crisis; a crisis that threatened to impact on a number of levels, including: the level of the school and the families and children which the school served, as well as the other staff who worked at the school and the jobs that they held; the level of professional competence, and the credibility of their professional identities; and the level of personal being, and the toll that this has upon their emotional and sometimes physical well-being.

Very often the problems that resulted in the various crises that we all faced could not be discussed in any other forum, and were beyond the immediate

control that each of us had; these were often urgent problems, some of which had no single long-term solution, and therefore required careful management and support. There was a degree of trust amongst the people who attended this group, that took time to build up, and revealing these difficulties often seemed analogous to a form of confession and unburdening.

As I go on to explain, these were not fantastic or imaginary situations; they are the realities of what it means to be the head of a primary school in our contemporary society; and the language that I have felt compelled to use reflects this reality, and because of this it would be wrong, ethically, to mitigate this expression in my thesis - above all it would be a betrayal of those who are affected by this reality, and a betrayal of the ideals about education that drove me to become a part of this profession.

5.1 Group information: December 2017

Set out below is a table of information which contextualises the professional location of each of the participants of the Headspace group, in addition the two LA representatives and the facilitator, who ran the formal sessions for the first two years, who were interviewed as a group. The transcripts from their interviews can be found in Appendix B. Email replies from Headteachers not in attendance can be found in Appendix C.

Participant	Information about their school	Headship experience	Presence in sessions 1-6
A (Researcher)	School is average size, single form entry, high mobility and transience, semi-rural in an area of deprivation with the largest Gypsy, Romany Traveller (GRT) cohort in the LA. Ofsted graded as "RI". Government graded as "Coasting".	First headship now totaling five years (January 2013-December 2017).	Present in all sessions.
B	Small, rural, Church of England school, half from entry. Ofsted graded as "good". SIAMS grade "outstanding".	First headship now totaling four years.	Not at 4, 5
C	School is average size, single form entry, high mobility in an area of high deprivation. Ofsted graded as "Good". Government graded as "Coasting".	First headship now totaling four years.	Present in all sessions.
D	School is smaller than average size, very low SEND, EAL, mobility and disadvantaged. Ofsted graded as "Good".	First headship now totaling five years.	Not at 5
E	School is smaller than average size, half form entry mixed age classes, low deprivation, rural. Ofsted graded as "Good".	First headship now totaling four years.	Not at 2, 5
F	School is smaller than average size, mixed age classes, Church of England, high mobility in	Second headship. This one now totaling four years.	Present in all sessions.

	the last 3 years, semi-rural, top 10% nationally for SEND. Ofsted graded as "Good".		
G	Average size, Church of England school, Ofsted graded as "good". SIAMS grade "outstanding". Government graded as "coasting". High mobility, SEND, disadvantaged,	First headship now totaling four years.	Not at 6
H	School is smaller than average size, half form entry mixed age classes, high mobility, rural. Ofsted graded as "Outstanding".	First headship now totaling four years.	Not at 3

I	Now retired, ex-Headteacher for several decades and ex-local authority seconded Headteacher representative. Advocate for Headteachers.
J	Trained facilitator of Headspace for many years.
K	Ex-Headteacher for several decades and current local authority seconded Headteacher representative. Advocate for Headteachers.

5.2 List of Reflexive Analyses

I have called each section an “exposure” to better understand the specific aspect of the state machinery that is unclad by the participants.

5.3 Exposure One: Lifesaver, Sanctuary, Directory or Armoury?

5.4 Exposure Two: “I’ve got a little bit Teflon”; externally or internally inflicted pressures?

5.5 Exposure Three: I’m not alone; collaboration and trust versus competition and judgement.

5.6 Exposure Four: Values?

5.7 Exposure Five: Job Saver. Sanity Saver

5.8 Exposure Six: Coasting Schools, League Tables, Losses

5.9 Exposure Seven: Competition and Subversive Selection

5.10 Exposure Eight: Succession Planning – the double edged sword

5.11 Exposure Nine: Autonomy: real or imaginary?

5.12 Exposure Ten: Ofsted, the life and death of a reputation.

5.13 Exposure Eleven: Negatives?

5.14 Exposure Twelve: Preparedness.

5.3 Exposure one: Lifesaver, Sanctuary, Directory or Armoury?

Exposure one is one of two exposures taken from the transcript of the initial Headspace session of the year, in which the value of the programme was evaluated and the expectations of contemporary headship discussed.

What is striking from this data is that, given the opportunity, and the right set of environmental circumstances, the views of this group of Headteachers metaphorically exploded. This could not occur elsewhere because exposing aspects of the educational imaginary that draw into question the mechanisms for managing it can have disastrous ramifications on the job security of individuals within the system. This raised serious ethical considerations for all members of the group and which have been discussed in the previous chapter. No other such platforms for discussion exist. Ofsted and the LA, for example, make such unconventional discussion and 'exposure' impossible. Woven throughout the transcript are references to trust, honesty and safety, which clearly demonstrate that authentic views could be, and were, shared without fear of recrimination or reprisal, despite the known purpose of the recording. This was certainly an example of what was to become very rich and detailed data, ranging from 23 minute, to 78 minute discussions, as the year progressed, which is captured in full in Appendix A.

Naturally, as the researcher, there is a sense of responsibility to both expose the subjective realities as understood by this group, reflecting upon these images of reality and analysing them in a clinical way, with the known backdrop of the national educational and political agenda, whilst also protecting the identify, safety and professional integrity of the group.

There is a consciousness that as researcher, the purpose of the discussion should be sanitised for data collection purposes. It is common for me to have input, and often contentious or impassioned input, into meetings both in large public forums, and also in this more arcane setting; however, I attempted to leave as much of the discussion during the sessions to the other participants, in order to gather their views without prejudice. Naturally, this was difficult, as

the topics covered in the sessions are not without their complexities and at times, for me as colleague participant, not to have an opinion and state my view would have stilted the otherwise innate manner of communication that all participants had become familiar with from me.

There was a real sense that, once the group had been introduced to the general topic for discussion, the desire to express themselves, to ensure that their thoughts were exemplified with clarity yet respect for each other, was almost overwhelming. This was evidenced by the rapidity of speech at times displayed by the participants, the way in which they modified the views of each other to further explain and explore a viewpoint, and the range of unsolicited responses shared. Again, this is demonstrated throughout all six sessions and is an indicator of the collective trust and respect developed over time.

There is a real sense of juxtaposition between the almost entirely fictive and illusionary picture of the education system, the imaginary, that the participants in the education system must conspire to report on publicly, and the lived reality of the more morally repugnant system experienced by the participants and recorded here in a frantic fashion, in what they perceive as desperate and intensely punitive circumstances.

This exposure can be considered below under several themes identified by me, which are present and evidenced within the narrative, yet not necessarily acknowledged by the establishment. However, the overall picture that the meeting exemplifies is one of reliance upon, and relief to participate in, Headspace as a programme. There was a universal agreement that the programme over time had been positively transformational, changing the perception of self in many participants from that of inadequate, clueless incompetent to accomplished and growing, at times empowered, individual; this will be further examined below.

1. Life Saver

Whilst ostensibly this is about the saving of the individual life of the Headteacher, it could also refer to saving the 'life' of the institution in which the Headteacher works; the environment for the children who attend the school; the faith of the parents; the jobs of the staff; and more generally, the credibility of the project of education which they prop up, despite the fact that this is a barely tenable undertaking and only held together for them by the weak and fragile platform of Headspace.

F: *Headspace is a lifesaver.*

D: *I agree with that, I describe it as a safe haven...*

There is evidence in this, the initial discussion, of a leitmotif of undisputed early feelings of inadequacy, incompetence and almost *cluelessness*, of the participants at the beginning of their careers as Headteachers. There is also evidence to suggest that over time, confidence, both individually and as a group, to support each other has developed and that this is core to the group sessions both in their physical sense, removing the individual from the relentless daily grind, and the shared consciousness of the participants. Therefore the programme is literally and metaphorically a *lifesaver*.

It is possible that the emotional, social and physical need to be with trusted people, in an environment perceived as safe, is as a direct result of not feeling that way in their school environment. On occasions, for Headteachers, schools are intimidating, threatening places from which safety and solace must be sought. The consequences for failure, perceived or real in terms, of performance against national criteria are professionally ruinous and can result in job loss.

F: *If [names a Local Authority] did something like this I would have had a much more successful first headship...*

There is the expectation, from analysing the discourse, that each must have an external image, which could be perceived as a very necessary avatar or

pretence, utilised to both secure a harmonious and calm environment for stakeholders such as parents, staff and children, and also for those who sit in judgement. This pretence in effect involves the individuals in colluding with the media driven spectacle, or the *hyperreality*, Debord (1962); when this is juxtaposed with an internal image or *reality*, the disjuncture between the two *personalities* creates the constant source of tension and anxiety captured in the data.

In this sense, it is clear that schools are contemporary incarnations of Debord's (1992) Spectacle: a body that is narrated into existence by the Headteacher through corporate storytelling. The more elaborate, detailed and positive the story, the less likely that Ofsted will downgrade a school, the more likely that the school will be rewarded rather than punished. The sole purpose of the Headteacher becomes rooted in gathering enough information to create a believable and enjoyable narrative. This is both exhausting, and as evidenced in the data, not what Headteachers really wish to be doing. Yet they must, both to survive and to thrive in a system where the sensational dominates discourse. What is evident from the data is that there is a chasm between the facade publicly presented, in the absence of fundamental reality, and what is experienced and shared in a variety of forums; this impact of which is personally and professionally challenging for the Headteachers.

The façade is used as a form of protection and a barrier against the assaults of the role, yet is not fully formed as a new Headteacher and steps must be taken to rapidly discern methods for its development if resilience is to be realised. If this is not the case, as is clear from one member of the group, then the potential outcome can be the loss of employment, humiliation and devastation of sense of self.

F: ... *four months later I'm out of a job and the LA are nowhere.*

Baudrillard (1993), suggested that contemporary models of reality do not exist, that the distinction between the real and the imaginary, between sign and signified has been obliterated. 'The real is... the hyperreal' (Baudrillard, 1993, p.73). He further suggested that society was configured by 'models of a real without origin or reality' (Baudrillard, 1994, p.1), hence the 'hyperreal is beyond representation.' It is impossible to compartmentalise education and represent it as a real entity, particularly if the intent is to show that a dominant has had a positive effect on it as a subject. Therefore, ever more intricate methods of portraying the act of educating and the impact of education, are invented and mass spectacle, only possible through modern media technology has become prolific. One method of developing the façade, or the *simulacra* that stands in the place of truth, Baudrillard (1993), whilst also nourishing the reality, is attending a Headspace programme, which, as a result of the way in which it is configured and established through a skilled and knowledgeable coach, offered the invested participants opportunity for personal and professional growth. For Baudrillard (1993), life can be reduced to simulacra in which there is an illusionary world on an imaginary plane from which there is no escape; analogous with the world of education.

D: *It doesn't matter who's got your back though, there's a difference here for me, Headspace is a supportive group and its supportive because we are honest with each other and sometimes it's refreshing to hear that someone is having an awful time and it's worse than yours, that's great, because in every other setting I go to, people fake it like they're the hero and they offer solution after solution when you're sat round a table at [names a local authority] about how great things are, but it's not the truth. This is where the truth is, so it feels supportive but none of us are accountable for each other and I think our expectation is that none of us are accountable for what goes on in our school, but I think as a new Head, you've got support from the LA but there was a sort of belief that they were accountable in some ways, but they're not. You sign on the dotted line on the contract and take that accountability on yourself, so you've got to have your own back, there isn't anyone else to have your back unless you've got the governors, the governors are there but they are not accountable like you are, it's on your head and I don't think that's made clear.*

2. Sanctuary

D: *...It's a safe environment for us to share our views, where we know that this has happened, can we problem solve this, can you help with that, and celebrate the positives as well, but it is definitely a sanctuary, safe haven where we can all get together, similar mindsets where we can think, well how can we help each other, because I felt that, coming into the first headship and half way through the year that it was a little bit like 'bumph' that's your school. Where's the support? Do you get any support from the local authority? Do you heck, you get none. None whatsoever.*

Closely linked to the notion that the Headspace group is perceived as a lifesaver is the notion that it is also perceived as a *sanctuary*; a place of asylum and refuge from a professional world that can so often be in a state of flux, or an environment of discord and disorder where reflection and contemplation time is at a premium. In addition, the professional setting requires the participants to uphold their flawless simulacra at all times, not allowing a glimmer of weakness to be exposed in any quarter in order to protect not just the individual, but the setting itself. That menace, that sense of alienation, that *professional threat*, is both perceived and also real. This was evidenced by both the lived experience of one of the participants, who in fact lost their first headship and was publicly shamed, and also sensed by the wider group; this is not an isolated incident, explored in Grant (2015) who talks of “growing levels of personal accountability” (para. 9) and Tickle (2017) who talks of ‘disappeared’ Headteachers who are “who are summarily sacked” for not producing results (para. 3).

The concept that this group of professionals would need a safe place, away from their respective workplaces, in order to share problems and experiences that had challenged them and attempt to collectively problem solve, whilst being inexperienced and lacking in direct support from the LA is an anathema, yet evident of post-Marxist alienation. Although Headteachers are autonomous, as an economic entity, they are coerced into achieving goals and facilitating activities that are dictated by the government, who own

the agency and set legislation, in order to extract from the children for whom the Headteachers are responsible, the maximum amount of value in the course of their education and as a result of competition among schools. However, it is clear from the ramifications exposed in the second literature review of neoliberal ideology and its manifestations, explored in the next section in terms of the simulacrum, that both power and unimaginable sums of money have been wrested from the LAs up and down the country. This political act has forced LAs to make difficult decisions, the results of which are juxtaposed within this narrative; offering funding for a coaching support group for a limited time, yet being unable to offer direct support when asked, for a range of reasons related to new managerialist policy.

One of the major issues faced by both LAs and also schools in times of competition, austerity and public funding cuts is, of course, finance. The corollary of this austerity is that one simply cannot afford to pay experienced consultants to come and help with issues beyond the experience base of a new Headteacher. However, there is another issue, possibly more pertinent, which is the capacity for LAs and schools to access support. Even if finances were available, many experienced Headteachers are retiring, either early or at the natural end of their tenure, in addition to many experienced teachers leaving the profession early due to dissatisfaction with it, as exemplified in the literature review on sustainable leadership; limiting availability of those skilled enough to offer advice.

A final potential barrier to accessing support, as is clear in the transcript, is how to get it without setting off *triggers* for those tasked with educational surveillance. In order to allocate funds to support a school, the LA must classify the school as needing that support, which, as understood by one of the participants, can create an *alert* for OFSTED. This, in turn, creates a climate of reactive, rather than proactive support offered to schools, which have already caused concern, when judged against the high stakes criterion used by OFSTED.

B: *It's all down to finance but the difference...part of the difference*

I feel between the diocese and the LA is, when I picked up this school with its 'good' label it, was definitely an RI when I got there and the LA knew that. I phoned up and said I need some help with this because we've got Ofsted pending at any time. I was just an acting Head at the time, so I said I need some help with this, let's get moving and get this school back to where it should be, and they said "well we can put you as a vulnerable school and we can give you this, this, this, this but that will have alarm bells for Ofsted" so without that tag I couldn't have that level of support...

Although advocates of capitalist policy may believe that it rationalises, makes rational, the workplace in order that it may be better measured and reported upon, when examined in a clinical sense, the ramifications of this are that some of the participants in the educational hyperreality must at times behave in a distinctly irrational way as exemplified above, and which makes no logical sense. For Zizek (1989) this was akin to believing in order *not* to believe, a version of discord between what is being done and what is believed is being done; thus people create a false representation of the social reality to which they belong.

The result of having to leave a school to flounder rather than give support when needed and asked for, lest unwelcome external attention is foisted upon it (or perhaps more importantly, *the LA* should it have too many schools causing concern), is that entire staff bodies are left deflated, disillusioned and planning to seek alternative employment, and often a Headteacher who takes personal responsibility for the inevitable failure, as evidenced in the transcript.

How that Headteacher then moves forward, with a decimated staff, particularly if they are newly qualified and newly appointed, is contextualised throughout many of the transcripts (shown in full in Appendix A), but suffice it to say, the Headspace programme clearly offers the requisite *safe haven* in order for them to freely share issues faced and problem solve as part of a group. Potentially as a consequence of the group having no other remit than to support, and indeed, in doing so potentially enlighten colleagues, as inexperienced as they are, prior to them suffering a similar fate. There is no

room and no contingency for Headteachers to contest this hyperreality in the public sphere, lest they be labelled *incompetent*, so they are forced to create their own space in which to do it away from the public gaze, whilst publicly supporting the official view of reality, the simulacrum. It is this constant tension between public and private reality that creates the need for a safe haven for certain groups.

The concept of seeking, and being given, external support and protection of both governors and the LA is also juxtaposed within this narrative with the desire to seek, and be given, external support and protection *from* both governors *and* the LA. In many respects, this is akin to a Kafkaesque notion of having no other choice but to try to support a kind of madness in the system where the instruments of New Managerialism appear bizarre and accountability measures create surreal predicaments for Headteachers (Kafka, 2003). The vulnerability felt by the group is almost tangible through the narrative and the lack of trust for anyone *not* of the group is also visceral. The desire to protect themselves, and one another, is evident and has flourished as a result of the honesty shared amongst the participants who have remained over time, as opposed to other supposed arenas where support could be garnered. It is spaces outside Headspace, facilitated by the LA and other groups, in which collaboration is perceived to be inauthentic and fallacious because privileged above the collegiality experienced in Headspace is the neoliberal informed inter-competitiveness experienced within clusters of schools that are geographically close, or between Headteachers who have a personal agenda, where the participants feel least supported.

As a result of the accountability that underpins all stakeholders in contemporary educational discourse, there is both internal surveillance, as the neoliberal apparatus has been absorbed by individuals and they self-police, and external surveillance; therefore there is a lack authentic freedom to simply *be*. As actors in the fiction that is the education system, Headteachers identify with the gaze, in a process of subjectivity. Copjec (1989) conceives of the gaze as an intermediary between the image that is

seen and an ideological lens. For Copjec (1989) it is through the alternating states of recognition and misrecognition, the Headteacher as the subject “seeks the self beyond the self-image, with which the subject constantly finds fault” (p.60). Lacan (1977) explains that, “in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture...what determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside...one can see at the perceptual level, how the screen re-establishes things, in their status as real” (p. 160). This manifests itself in the observations of the individuals, and their clear tenacity and a desire to *do good* within their schools, no matter what. The participants within this group share a very real altruistic sense of wanting to *do it for the children*, which can become lost.

B: *Isn't it a shame that that's how you think, because we're actually all in this job for the children?*

H: *But then, do you need a piece of paper that says outstanding?*

B: *Exactly. Isn't it a shame that we're thinking, I can never get to outstanding?*

C: *That's why they're trying to take the outstanding grading away aren't they? People just want to do it whereby you are good enough or not good enough, and I think that would make it much, much easier.*

3. Armoury

As a result of dealing with a range of, at times, overwhelming incidents such as homeless children sleeping in cars, ill trained governors and aggressive parents and learning from the experience, then sharing the experience with each other, there is a sense that a profound collective wisdom has evolved. The notion that the Headteachers are at times overwhelmed, that they feel under threat and feel the need to fight, on all fronts is clear. The sense that they feel besieged by the establishment, doing battle for funding or support from parents/Ofsted/their own governors amongst others is evident. Transformative examples of supportive, collaborative experiences occur throughout the data gathered, and there is a sense of growing perspicacity,

but it is clear that this cycle of development within the Headspace setting is what has enabled the participants to collect a range of protective armour.

Repeatedly returning to the sessions and, in a sense, debriefing, or attending the sessions and strategising, has led to each member feeling like they can return to the fray and continue the battle. The concept of Teflon is interchangeable with Kevlar, but the meaning is synonymous with a layer of protection being applied, or put on, in order to prevent harm coming to the individual, and that is the unanimous view of the participants; a session at Headspace is therefore akin to a session at the mirror in the powder room, it is a chance to be away from the prying eyes of the world to reapply metaphorical war paint. What this says about the reality of the education sector is that it is about protecting oneself, needing protection from external bodies and fear. If the opportunity for Headspace was not available, if the school holidays were not spaced out at relatively equal times throughout the year, one wonders if the job would be at all sustainable based on the data gathered.

Also evident from the transcript is that collectively, as a result of changes to the curriculum (DfE, 2014), performance management and appraisal (DfE, 2013), Ofsted schedules (Gov.Uk 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017), and staff, each of the participants in the group took on a difficult school. That they took on schools as newly qualified and appointed Headteachers, schools that needed serious attention in order to ensure that they were rated as Good, or retained a Good/Outstanding judgement, or were improving according to Ofsted, but more importantly, according to the highly dedicated and motivated Headteacher professionals working alongside them.

D: *I think there's a difference for schools, because we've all worked and taken on schools that are in a mess and there's a one-size-fits-all offer from the LA who they support and in that gang of people whose schools are in a mess are experienced Heads as well, and you'd expect any LA or any support network to put in place stuff like a teaching learning review and check what they're doing and hold them to account in a different way, whereas we haven't got proven capacity to show improvement, so they put that whole, dump the load on you, and see what*

happens, but we're all capable of doing that job, we've improved our schools on our own, we don't need that support really, we don't need that level of scrutiny and feedback, we can steer it.. there'll be some incapable experienced Heads who aren't doing the job properly, they will have a different outcome to what we've had and perhaps not as good at doing the job as us new Heads are, but I get that the LA have to check and to make sure that we are doing it and then they back off quite quickly once they realize that actually they don't need the support and they just walk away, and then you get a bit of consultant support or whatever.

It is also clear that in working with these schools, throughout their difficulties and in systematically rectifying the issues presented, the participants had developed an individual wealth of experience that they were able to rely upon and also share. It was evident from the transcript that the contentious perception was that in schools where established Headteachers suddenly found themselves in a category such as “Coasting” as explored in the literature review chapters (DfE, 2017c), they were more inexperienced than the participants.

C: *...It's not self-sustaining at the moment because all that happens is someone comes in criticizes you, you spend so much time defending and feeling bad about the fact that someone's said something bad about you and it's gone out to everybody. Whereas you can be open and self-critical, can't you? ...*

E: *It's the image that they're trying to portray to the public and if you had to go into the school and look at it deep down it's not necessarily factual.*

It is support from Headteachers such as this, who are long serving members of Good/Outstanding schools and are rewarded with the opportunity to work as Associate School Improvement Advisors (ASIAs), yet lack experience in challenging schools, that has been a bone of contention for several members of the group evidenced within the data.

D: *You meet so many people that aren't actually interested in you and they offer you support and advise and lovely things, lovely snippets but it's not actually real. It's not designed to help you it's designed to show off what they're doing in their own school*

and that's what I found really unhelpful because I just came away from meetings in groups where I thought there's just no benefit to it, it's great sharing good practice but you're not, you're just bragging, there's a difference between sharing.

The development of metaphorically innovative armour means that several of the participants have been keen to explore research and have come to understand that the culture of high stakes and accountability does not necessarily mean that improvements will be evidenced. Threat and menace within education do not appear to have shown any tangible improvement to social mobility, or that movement up international league tables for PISA have been made, or that children are happier and more fulfilled than in the past. It is the conjecture of the participants that other ways of making improvements in the educational provision are possible, if Headteachers lead the agenda, from a position of a desire for the greater good of all children, not competition between schools for the best performing ones. What these Headteachers want is a measure of effectiveness, if there must be an instrument to measure effectiveness of schools, that judges a school against a universal checklist of what is provided, rather than the limiting academic outcomes of children which can be affected by external factors beyond their influence. These Headteachers have a desire to make learning about enjoyment and creativity, where league tables are scrapped and assessment becomes about helping the child understand at their own pace rather than that dictated by Westminster, who are far removed from the school and any accountability to the standards within it and the community that it serves.

B: *That's what they are required to do. They have higher people that they have to be accountable to. Ofsted come in and they are really there for the government aren't they? Because the government, it's all political. The government want to say "we've raised standards". None of that stuff is really about the children, they say it is, but it isn't and so you have to be mindful of what their remit is and play that game if you like, tick those boxes, but it's getting the balance between doing that as Head and not passing on all that fear to staff, and all that pressure and worry, which is why the data, you know, that the Head felt that pressure put it on to the teachers, the teachers felt that pressure and that's how you get in those situations, it's not about the children.*

4. Directory

As a newly appointed and newly qualified Headteacher, it is clear from the data that there is a sense that there is no direction given from any source, other than the latest iteration of the Ofsted criteria, and what is not conventionally available is a directory of those one could call upon for advice. In my case it was discovering after two weeks in post that the school had a £45,000 deficit budget, and not knowing where to turn for advice.

More formal support comes with a health warning. That health warning is not just about the personal cost, as in the stress for **all** employees and governors, but also the loss of credibility of the institution, the retention of jobs, particularly of the Headteacher, if these things are not handled sensitively, as formal support requests can trigger the unwanted attentions of Ofsted. Technically there is no individualised support for schools, only a generic and one-size-fits-all model from the LA. Church schools appear to have a more holistic approach, however do not carry the same degree of accountability for academic standards in schools as do the LA.

Schools do not work on research widely available in the public domain, despite Headteachers being keen to be at the cutting edge of the profession, they are the done unto rather than the decision makers and those that do unto *themselves*.

All three of these points lead to the assumption that Headspace offers unequivocal support; an eclectic educational almanac for the participants giving an informal, anecdotal directory of those who could be approached in a range of situations; and a forum for research developments to be shared and discussed openly.

5.4 Exposure two: “I’ve got a little bit Teflon”; externally or internally inflicted pressures?

Exposure Two is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the initial Headspace session of the year, in which the most difficult aspects of headship, as perceived by the participants, were discussed.

This exposure can be considered below under two themes, evidenced within the narrative, which although inherently absorb elements of all of the themes discussed in Exposure One, explicitly reveal the most trying aspects of the role of the contemporary Headteacher. The themes analysed below could be considered as the reason that the participants need the safe haven, armour, and directory alluded to in Exposure One. The conflict between internal and external will be critically examined in the next section of this chapter, explicitly through both Debord and the hyperreal, and Baudrillard and the simulacrum.

Internal Pressures

It is clear from the transcripts that participants believe that there are essentially five internal foci for intense pressure within a school: staffing; safeguarding discussed in Page (2013) and Skovdal and Campbell (2015) who discuss the complexity of simultaneous immersion and objectivity required of Headteachers dealing with staff issues and also how teachers can be cast as agents responsible for ameliorating the impact of complex social issues; Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND). Finally, parents, and governors discussed in Baxter (2017), and Olmedo and Wilkins (2017) who focus on how parents are gathered across three policy locations and assembled as transmitters of utility and marketisation; primarily how parents behave as consumers, are invited to be governors and can act as founders of schools.

F: *Parents, that's all I need to say.*

E: *Ditto*

- A: *I was going to say mine fell into 1 of 4 categories and I couldn't pick between. Parents is one, and the viciousness and the personal attacks, we all accept it isn't personal but when you're being viciously attacked verbally, by email or physically...*
- F: *They just don't see what you do, do they? And some of them, you know, God bless them they're struggling at home and they're projecting, and you know that. They're projecting...*
- A: *And also high on my list was safeguarding/SEN/when they're both combined that's been really like horrible, and governors.*
- E: *Yeah! And they were my 3!*
- H: *Staff capability.*
- D: *... the difference in people: what they present and what the reality is, what their belief is about the culture in school... There's a couple of little niggles and a couple of little cracks that I'm just... people mask stuff and that's the main problem.*
- B: *I'm the same as H really, just going through this capability procedure and I think I've got a little bit Teflon actually...*

Of these, the most harrowing appeared to be issues surrounding staff performance, expectations of which are clearly set out in national policy that Headteachers must implement rigorously, and governors must check annually in order to apportion pay rises or alternatively commence a procedure to manage underperformance, known as capability.

The natural discord of being a newly qualified Headteacher, new to post, whilst attempting to establish a culture within the school in which all stakeholders feel valued and where standards are not compromised, simultaneously maintaining staff morale and pleasure in the job is evident from the transcripts.

Staff, who must also have both professional and private personae, must wrestle with their own internal conflict if the newly created culture of the school is not congruent with the previous established one, or with their own

preferences. Some of this internal conflict within staff, as exemplified within the transcripts, manifests as clique working, lack of collaboration, internal competition and mistrust. It is also true of a high stakes accountability culture that internal competition can manifest when staff need to ensure that their class attain in order for the teacher to be rewarded for their performance.

The Headteachers within this group, had the added dimension of managing effectively the radical government changes to performance related pay, Ofsted inspection schedule, and curriculum overhaul which all took place simultaneously to the start of their role. The internalisation of these external policies has created a false focal point for the anger and frustration of staff within schools as it befalls to the Headteacher to implement policy agreed upon, without input from them, by those in Government.

An inordinate number of the group have dealt with Human Relations (HR) departments, and teaching unions with alarming results demonstrating discontinuity between policy, implementation of policy, staff expectations and the needs of the school. This is a significant outcome of implementing the following policy directives: four different iterations of Ofsted schedule; new performance related pay and appraisal strategies; plus a new curriculum requiring all new resources and planning. In addition to the considerable changes mentioned, the participants also took on schools in challenging areas or circumstances, at a time of national and international austerity. In effect, they have been expected to raise the bar across all aspects of teaching whilst reduced budgets have meant that staff have been expected to do much more without an increase in pay, and with their salary capped by the government, which has caused huge discontent that has had to be managed.

Managing capability procedures, discussed during this session, is an example of where two participants literally scrutinised both themselves, and the dichotomy of their individual personality, separating it from their Headteacher personality. This splitting and reframing thus maintains the façade, the simulacra, alluded to in Exposure One. The effort required to

manage the process, and all other elements of the school, caused anxiety because the individual must literally and figuratively split their own personality from that of Headteacher in order to enact the contested aspects demanded of the role. This perpetual cycle of splitting and reframing is familiar to all of the participants and evident throughout the transcripts across the range of situations faced by them.

Parents, managing their expectations and behaviour, in addition to that of their children, has had an impact upon the participants, particularly when there have been situations involving SEND, safeguarding or Children's Social Care (CSC). The emotional adjustment required of parents when they realise that their child has SEND or the anguish and frustration that they feel when trying to make their child's needs known to school can create huge tensions between home and school, usually managed by the Headteacher. When referrals to CSC take place there are emotive conversations between Headteacher as the responsible professional and the parent who is often extremely defensive. This can be exacerbated when the child is vulnerable and also has SEND and more so when the family is also in a situation of deprivation or financial hardship.

Many of these tensions, manifested acutely in schools and therefore managed by Headteachers, are well documented and originate in changes at national level in policy for inclusion and SEND, discussed in Monsen, Ewing and Kwoka (2013) including parental choice; lack of funds available to support children with SEND and ever decreasing provision for the most challenged students at LA level; the well documented impact of marketisation on the social care system of the country (Glynos, 2014; Klenk and Pavolini, 2015), coupled with increasing problematisation of the social lives of the nation such as drug dependency, family breakdown, decline in mental health, social media and the wider media machine with its false narrative of expectation as alluded to in Pantazis (2015); Chauhan and Foster (2014); and Robinson (2012).

As stated, safeguarding and CSC issues create an inordinate amount of anxiety for the participants, and in reality are beyond the scope of the educational remit of many who seek a career in education. As the social system of the country has eroded, such as changes to the housing, disability and benefits system (Rampen, 2017), and the rise of food banks (Trussel Trust, 2017), more pressure has been applied to schools to become secondary caregivers to vulnerable children thus many policies based on social justice call for teachers to become agents of change (Pantic and Florian, 2015). Whilst balancing the expectations of the market, with all that this entails, the needs of the child, and usually the parent, must also be met and this discontinuity can crush, as evidenced by the transcript. Despite this not being an aspect measured and quantified in Ofsted criterion, it nevertheless is taken as seriously as curriculum delivery and staff performance by the Headteacher participants of this group.

An often unseen and undocumented aspect of issues such as these, but evidenced throughout the transcripts however, is that only the most senior staff deal with them and they can be so traumatic that the Headteacher will often take home the voice of the child in their head, which can have a damaging effect on sleep patterns, family relationships, and ultimately health.

The ability to recruit and retain key staff, as explored in Chapter Three, is only one aspect of the leadership of the school. The pool of people from whom it is possible to recruit governors depends entirely upon the socio-economic demographic of the area and can influence the smooth running of the school, the dispassionate decision making process required, and the protection and care for the Headteacher with disastrous conclusions as seen in the transcript explored in Exposure One.

External Pressures

The three major external pressures experienced by the participants in this group centre around the budget, which is set via a formula in Westminster; policy that must be implemented by school but is set by Westminster; and

Ofsted, the designated inspectorate of the government. All of these external factors sit beneath an umbrella of marketisation founded in neoliberal ideology, both the notion of doing more with less and being held to account for it, and the imaginary distance that exists between state and the market. As a result, there is no recourse to contest these pressures for Headteachers, indeed when they do try to expose the simulacrum publicly, they are branded dramatic or disingenuous by the establishment, as evidenced by George (2017), Blake (2017) and Owen (2017b), thus creating a nightmarish and surreal context in which to work.

5.5 Exposure Three: I'm not alone; collaboration and trust versus competition and judgement.

Exposure Three is the first of two exposures taken from the transcript of the second Headspace session of the year, in which the notion of professional support, as perceived by the participants, was discussed.

This exposure can be considered below under two themes, evidenced within the narrative, which although inherently absorb elements of other themes discussed in Exposure One, explicitly, and unanimously reveal that the Headteacher participants within this group feel that Headspace is unique as a forum for support in their role.

F: *I think the most important thing for this is that there is a purpose behind Headspace and that is that it's about our wellbeing, and that is the prime thing about Headspace, it's time away from school and it's about us as people not just as Headteachers and when you look at all the other support networks that you might have, there isn't any of them that will fill that remit...*

The belief is that, without it, the group would have nowhere to go for wellbeing and philanthropic support. The two themes analysed below could be considered as problematised diverging elements of the neoliberal dominated educational imaginary, what they perceive as a threatening, alienating and lonely landscape that requires vigilant navigation for survival as explained earlier in the justification for use of the exposure metaphor.

A: *... outside of here what we're faced with is isolation and threat and being alone (B: and guilt, and judgement) (D: that's from different levels though, for each person its different).*

Collaboration

Collaboration in education is a rarity in the current educational regime unless it is to enhance competition; everything is punitive, from national targets in

high stakes tests to league tables created, Ofsted to performance management. Collaboration is almost something that is discouraged except if it masks educational problems. It is clear from the transcript that wellbeing is key to the evident individual commitment to this group. The level of regularity and high attendance rate for individuals at the sessions validates this view. This is a metaphorical and literal *safe place*, as explored earlier, where no judgement is levied upon participants; where each trusts the other with their reputation and livelihood; where celebrations and commiserations are commonplace and the negatives and positives of the varying schools are shared without restriction.

G: *For me it's importantly collaborative and I think if I didn't have Headspace I don't think I would be as strong or as confident a leader that I've evolved into, because this isn't just about our wellbeing but a wider network of colleague Headteachers that brings a wealth of experience across a range of different types of schools... this one brings the most value because this is a form of wellbeing but it's also born of trust, whereas in a partnership there can be competition ... I don't ever feel here that I have to sell myself or be anything other than me as a leader who has good days and bad days and problems and successes etc. That collaborative promotes for me quality leadership because it reflects on the good times the bad times and you share experiences in a place of trust and safety.*

Most notable is that as a result of this unrestricted, unfiltered sharing of the good, the bad and the ugly, a wealth of experience has been accumulated across a range of school settings and this repository is available for the participants to make withdrawals from at any time. An outcome of this is the testimony of participants that they would not be as strong or as confident as leaders had it not been for the collaborative approach of the group.

B: *But I think that's what is particularly valuable about meeting here, it's like a professional meeting with friends, there's no agenda, every partnership I go to or meeting or cluster whatever there's an agenda and here there isn't necessarily an agenda, there's things we like to share like the whiskers and things like that, so there are professional things that we do*

share and help each other, but you know if you go off agenda because somebody's upset over something then that's what we have to deal with and it's very personal, it's that professionalism amongst friends...

Part of the appeal of the group structure is the fact that now it is self organised there is no agenda. As it is flexible, there are opportunities to deviate from the proposed sharing of research or good practice, news or developments on the national stage, should the need arise and a member of the group require the time to share. The intimate nature of the, now much smaller, group facilitates the fluidity that is evident. It is perhaps this aspect which allows the lifeline concept, explored in Exposure One, to have flourished.

Competition

The converse to this interpretation of the group members in respect to Headspace, is that the other potential supportive groups of Headteachers to which the participants belong, do not have the same authentically collaborative foundation. Indeed, there is the distinct impression that, whether with merit or not, those meetings have clear Headteacher *favourites* as identified by members of the LA hierarchy, and inherently known by Headteachers, in a similar way to children knowing that they are in the top, or bottom, groups.

D: *That won't be wellbeing though [in a cluster group], there's too much competition and too much suspicion in there's local authority favoured people in the group...there's not that whole common understanding...And this is like the misfit group...*

H: *I try and keep under their eyes, so that nobody notices me, nobody in the diocese knows anything about me, nobody in the authority knows anything about me.*

There is a desire to be subversive, to work beneath the radar, avoiding attention which could be both positive or negative; never contribute publicly to other groups for fear of members of those groups taking information away

from the meeting to be used as a weapon against the speaker, or for the potential ridicule and embarrassment that saying something different may create. This is possibly paranoia, but in a market place, where weakness is seen as something that should be eradicated, this unmistakable form of self protection removes the opportunity for individuality, eccentricity and quirkiness which rather than being celebrated is more likely to be vilified. This feeds directly into the feelings of inadequacy and alienation revealed in Exposure One by the participants. This apparent homogenisation of views and lack of public debate or challenge has also possibly contributed to entrenched negative behaviour, abjection of those who disagree or who have different views, and the creation of a self-perpetuating vicious circle.

The alternative to Headspace is clear to these group members: isolation. The contemplation that without it they would have literally nowhere to go for genuine support is abhorrent.

H: *...when I go to the Headspace I'm me, and I never share it with anybody else, but I can share my fears because we've all had similar and over the 4 years it's really confirmed for me that actually I can do this job, I can be a Headteacher, I have my good days my bad days, doubts like everybody else, but being with you, listening to the things we've all faced, I think actually I'm not alone, I'm not the only one who has all this self-doubt and everything and that's what makes us better. It's the only place and if I didn't have this I would have nowhere. I wouldn't have anywhere.*

5.6 Exposure Four: Values?

Exposure Four is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the second Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of core values and how these inform leadership style, were discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of values, evidenced within the narrative, which although inherently absorbs elements of other themes discussed previously, reveals that the Headteacher participants within this group feel that the participants who remain are all of a similar mind set with similar leadership styles and core values.

A significant defect of the system thinking that has informed policy is the oversimplification policymakers have used in creating abstract categories, for example standards, and attempting to make them concrete, and real. This approach may have contributed to the erosion of educational quality and values placing destructive expectations upon children (Bates, 2012). Much is now documented in child mental health and is attributed, to a greater or lesser degree, to tests in schools that are arguably without merit or use to the child. "Pressure to pass often leaves pupils as young as seven 'sobbing with worry', raising fears they may cause long-term damage". (Paton, 2008, para.1) Clearly the potential damage inflicted upon children by sitting tests in primary school is not a new phenomenon (Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip & Watson, 2006; Rothi, Leavey & Best, 2008; Prymachuck, Graham, Haddad & Tylee, 2012), and the Cambridge Review (Alexander, 2013) made suggestions to change the way children are tested, yet both children and schools are still forced to comply. Neoliberalism supports a certain kind of values not congruent with those of social equality, but of the market place. The notion of altruistic educational values, is therefore compromised, threatened, and yet without them the purpose of education might seem to be undermined and reduced to a form of competition without meaning, a hollow experience, aligned to Baudrillard's more radical thinking, discussed in the next section of this thesis. It makes people question what they are in education for, what the purpose is, as is evidenced in the transcripts: it runs,

therefore, on the goodwill of the promulgation of certain ethical principles which are now falling outside the remit of what education has become. The absence of guidance, the mechanistic regime, the erosion of values is symptomatic of education in general and clearly affecting job satisfaction of leaders in education who feel the compromises most keenly.

D: *... the proof is in the trust has not been broken, I've never heard of the trust being broken in this group by anybody, whereas in other groups I've shared things in meetings that I thought were confidential and other people have told me about them later on that I haven't told them about, so you never know where the information is going, even though there is confidentiality at every meeting you go to ...*

G: *But that comes back to us valuing the core purpose, which is well being.*

The two opposing leadership styles alluded to in the transcript, collaborative and corporate, could be considered as key differences between those who have chosen to remain part of the group since its inception and those who chose to leave at varying points over the years, or those who reject the hyperreal and those who do not struggle to work within it.

D: *That may be why they're not here though...because that's very value driven, so if their values didn't quite fit how they wanted the group to be then that's a reason to move on isn't it...*

...

G: *...If you think about what would define you as a leader and what's your core purpose as a leader, I think we are all very similar in that respect...I'm not actually here for anybody else except children and I don't actually strive to be this "leader" which is above and beyond, I don't want to be an executive principal, I just want to do the best I can and my core purpose is the kids in my care.*

There is the suspicion that there is an arrogance inherent within a more corporate style of leader, a greater ambition to be an executive Headteacher, less desire to work in a collaborative way, and less desire to promote sustainability through distributed leadership. Indicative of a corporatised

leadership, explored in Courtney (2015), this is characterised by the promotion of the practices of business throughout all echelons of the school: curriculum, structure, pupil experience, and leadership practice. Corporate leadership in this sense produces and is produced through new types of primary school leader, evident though the transcripts, whose alignment of figurative capital with commercial discourse serves to increase their authority.

F: *I would imagine that to them, a support network would be frowned upon; to need a support network? It's just they're very business orientated!*

...

H: *...and when my staff come back, the things that they tell me has happened, or has been happening in his school, I couldn't even contemplate, as a human being, doing that to another human being and I think it's personality, it's leadership style and it's drive, and his drive is very different from my drive and I think the drive of this group is for the care of the children and the care of everybody and his drive to me totally different.*

The converse, the perception among the participants that there is a shared desire to value middle leaders, to allow risk taking and mistake making as part of a holistic desire to see colleagues grow and flourish under the leadership extolled, is perceived not as arrogant, but as preferable in style and certainly underpins the values that are held dear within the group. Whilst there is not a single definition of what the most efficacious leadership style is, clearly a leader who can operate effectively and remain unscathed within a corporate system will have less difficulty than one who attempts to reject it.

F: *You must be very confident in your area of ability to have that approach, especially your first year, are we lacking in confidence?*

D: *arrogance?*

...

C: *What we've all said is that it's about we feel everybody is a team and value in those middle leaders so therefore potentially you've got more emotional intelligence, because you know in*

that position you hated someone telling you what to do, you want to grow your leadership skills and that's what we're doing, growing leaders of the future...

It is possible that there is another reason for the membership to have reached a status quo; that the schools in which the participants currently work are either situated in difficult areas, had complex issues to resolve, or both. Given what has been explored in both literature reviews and the previous three Exposures, working relentlessly in isolation is unlikely to yield improvement, or sustainability of the role of headship in a time when funding is non-existent and experience is at a premium.

5.7 Exposure five: Job Saver. Sanity Saver.

Exposure Five is the first of two exposures taken from the transcript of the third Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of Headspace supporting mental health, was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the themes of both life saver and safe haven, evidenced within the narrative, which although this was discussed previously in Exposure One, collectively revealing that the Headteacher participants within this group feel that its nature, and the way that it has evolved over time, have become synonymous with the reprieve and respite essential to evaluate and consider the issues that present themselves, or face significant mental health issues and or leaving the profession.

A: *Has Headspace ever saved your job or your sanity?*

F: *Sanity - yes! Job - yes!*

C: *Sanity – yes! It reminds me to reflect upon things that I know about keeping mentally healthy and it puts things into perspective...I think that's what it does and it continues to give you the strength to challenge it...*

F: *I've got a distinct memory of coming to a session in the second year... and I'd decided I was looking for Deputy jobs and I was completely [indicates, with head in hands, despair]...down and within an hour I was like, "I love this job and I'm not going...I am good enough!" And it was that resilience...*

E: *I think you're absolutely right... it's given me a little more resilience, that Teflon, I've actually sent that out to a few of the teachers, it's Teflon.*

Headspace, it is clear, has alleviated the sense of isolation and loneliness felt by the participants; has enabled them and empowered them, to build resilience and a repository of experiences from which they can select a range of responses to unfamiliar problems; and has reaffirmed their flagging self confidence requisite in order to regain perspective.

F: *Headspace is not about fixing your problem...Headspace*

empowers you to deal with it or to just take that breath in order to meet that challenge, because nobody is going to come.

C: *And to see the wealth of other experiences that people are having, so if you've not come across that or thought about it you've got that kind of wealth of sharing... You've learnt from other peoples experiences.*

...

G: *I think your practice changes but I also think it validates the practise you have... because the headship is lonely. It continues to be very lonely, and it gets lonelier because we have more to deal with, more to address, more to consider, so having something like this you've got that safe-haven if you like to talk professionally about the things that concern you as a Head but also concern you as a person, as in a practitioner, because yes we're all Heads but I think there's a collective here that we're all very similar in our practice and the way we linked it empowers us.*

D: *... headspace has stopped it from being a lonely thing.*

G: *I don't disagree with you...I feel stronger now than I felt when I walked in this morning, because of listening, because of reflecting, because of taking time out and having reaffirmed... I'm doing a good job!*

In addition to this, it is clear that these issues are, as evidenced in the transcripts, always linked to both internal and external pressures discussed in detail in Exposure Two.

5.8 Exposure Six: Coasting Schools, League Tables, Losses.

Exposure Six is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the third Headspace session of the year, in which the concepts most aligned to neoliberal architecture, such as performance tables, coasting schools status and the repercussions of these on the school and the leadership, were discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of internal and external pressures, evidenced within the narrative, which although inherently absorbs elements of other themes discussed previously, undeniably, and explicitly reveals that the Headteacher participants within this group feel that the neoliberal agenda of publishing performance league tables is personally damaging to Headteachers if they work in deprived areas where traditionally schools do not perform well.

G: *And it comes back to it's all just part of the journey, it's ebbs and flows isn't it all the time, and actually on a scale of 1 to 10 when 10 means death, in 6 weeks time is it going to be chip paper, does it really matter? I really don't care about the coasting schools, I don't give one at all because I know hand on heart I do the best for those children... I've made peace with that.*

In addition to the personal anguish of the Headteachers in these schools, and their staff, league tables are also professionally damaging to the school in terms of loss of children to other schools, staff recruitment and retention.

C: *...Are we failing our children? Absolutely not, absolutely not, on a daily basis... I think the people that went at the bottom of the league table, I've had discussions with the [names a cluster of schools] they've had a terrible Christmas! Really been upset..., they were really, really upset because they didn't know what their parents were going to say! ... What is going to happen at the end of the day? So I might lose a couple of kids or families but if that is the case that's the case, it's out of my control, there's things that I can do and things that I can't do.*

The *armour* needed to survive this, and the personal tenacity to continue, doggedly striving for the children served by the school is evidenced by the assertion of the participants that regardless of a classification made by not attaining arbitrary figures imposed by a neoliberal system, their children are well catered for and nothing less than the best will suffice.

C: *And that comes back to your unconscious bias and mindfulness as well. It teaches you mindfulness and training this terrible, terrible beastie (which it can be) [indicates the brain], with addictions and all sorts of things and with our perception and stuff because we need to be seeing the positives, you know we need to be seeing those things, you know.*

It is palpable, again, that trust is a key factor in the success of the group and the feeling of security that the participants enjoy when sharing problems from all aspects of both personal and professional life. There is a sentiment of camaraderie apparent, a battle weariness that is well documented by those who survive combat together, a sense of “brothers-in-arms” who have survived dreadful skirmishes against the odds and are still smiling and laughing, albeit at times with gallows humour.

Evidenced within the transcript is the unequivocal desire for the sessions, the idea that the participants can just about contain the stress until the next session and that the fact the sessions are planned in advance can sustain them until they attend.

F: *But 4 or 5 weeks after Headspace I'm looking in the diary, when is the next meeting coming up?*

B: *What I think has helped me personally as a technically challenged person, whatsapp thing is great...can somebody help, I think we've probably done this bumph... I have yeah don't worry.... but it's that immediate oh my goodness what do I do with this I don't have to wait for this session to just get those quick answers and things: just whatsapp it.*

A: *The whatsapp thing that's developed from here is another layer of support we don't have to wait for a term or half term to get it instantaneously...*

There is also the notion, articulated within the input of the participants as well as the transcripts, that there is an avalanche of nonstop sharing and talking and expressing and decompression during the sessions so that they are highly charged to begin with and become more reflective towards the end of the discussion. It could be suggested that it is these mini vacations, these breaks, in addition to the cyclical holidays of the school year, which actually enable the Headteachers to either recharge or retain vital energy in order to perform the role. It could be argued then that without these sessions, and without the holidays the job would be simply untenable.

5.9 Exposure Seven: Competition and Subversive Selection.

Exposure Seven is the first of two exposures taken from the transcript of the fourth Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of inter-school competition was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of competition, inherent within the market ideology of a neoliberal education system, evidenced within the narrative, which overwhelmingly reveals that the participants within this group feel that if Headteachers want to build an empire on the back of a good reputation of the school, as based on published data and Ofsted inspection, then inclusion and competition are like oil and water.

They believe that the core principles of a marketised and neoliberal education climate, and the way that this has evolved over time, has created a clear segregation between schools in deprived areas, or those who serve children with SEND or social issues, and those in affluent areas who manage subversively to refuse to accept children with additional needs, or rapidly move them on.

G: *I think ... historically where I work there has been competition. ... if you are passionate about children...that can be different to empire building ... there are colleagues I know that are doing that, and they don't engage with you in the same way when you've got mobility in terms of children.*

C: *Yeah, I think there's a different outlook by different heads about which children come to the school... I hear of children going to a certain school and I think Yes! Because I know they are going to get the support the help, things that they need rather than someone just trying to move them on as quickly as they can...*

F: *I don't think it just counts for data either, because when I go to our EIP I am the school with the special children, look at you smiling (A: because I'm not in your EIP, because I wasn't wanted, and that was said)...*

Naturally, not all schools or all Headteachers will behave in this way. Despite the dichotomous iteration of truth revealed during the discussion, the participants of this group have established, both in the narrative and in real

life, a sense of social justice in which the needs of the children are paramount regardless of the impact on the published data for the school.

Whilst a generalisation, it is the view of the participants that in schools, lead by Headteachers who put children first, there is a permanent sense of vulnerability. Because the system is flawed, and schools are judged on the outcomes of children rather than the input of staff into the holistic need of the child, its family, and the wider community, schools will often fall into the bottom percentile of the national league table and this has ramifications for staff recruitment, retention and well being – not least that of the Headteacher.

Conversely, Headteachers who work in schools classified as Outstanding may have schools that are oversubscribed, yet have to resort to tactics that may not feel entirely comfortable in order to protect themselves and their reputation, because that reputation is built on data and with a single cohort change, or inspection schedule change, could be lost. The manner in which Headteachers do this *off rolling* ranges from conversations with parents about the suitability of the school for their child, exclusions and managed transfers; with a market place ideology, however, there is the inevitability of the implementation of market place strategies. This relentless treadmill can possibly have similar impact on the mental health of the Headteacher who must be on constant alert, scanning the horizon for demographic, cohort or political changes which could change the fortune of the school and, by association, the Head themselves.

E: *...I might be speaking out of turn, but with some leaders of other schools think, oh I don't think this school is working for you but there's this other school down the road that would be perfect for you, [C: but they do!] and it's only my perception is that they've got to be up here for data, data blah blah so therefore I don't need this perception of this person is not going to be able to give me that. [A: so it IS about competition?]*

There is no sense of anger from the participants, perhaps surprisingly, despite several leading schools in the bottom five percent nationally for

published data and working under the threat of an Ofsted category, instead there is an innate understanding about why this divide may exist and it is down to the Ofsted and league table system, synonymous with the discontinuous manifestation of current ideology in education.

C: *...and why, why is it, because we've got a top down pressure! I don't blame the Heads in this position because they've had to beef themselves up, haven't they, they've got to prove it round the governor table, they've got to see themselves in the paper at the top of the table.*

It was mooted that perhaps a fairer system would be to simply judge on the process of educating children, rather than the outcomes they attain; but it was also mooted that parents in less affluent areas would not place the same importance on an Ofsted report as this is not a driver in their choices about school selection, particularly if they cannot drive, are illiterate, or do not have English as a primary language.

Nevertheless, one of the real problems for schools, considered sink schools, in terms of pupil numbers and competition is that if a school within driving distance attains the "Outstanding" from Ofsted, the likelihood is that even if it is not the local school, parents will drive their child to the Outstanding school as they perceive that this affords their child a better education.

D: *...different people attach different things to it. Like with [names a local school] down the road they're good at the moment, I think they're outstanding though, but if they get the outstanding stamp it will be detrimental to us because the kids will shift in that direction and parents in our area, I don't want to cause any offence here, parents will look at OFSTED reports and will attach some importance to it for their choice. Kids in your area, this is a sweeping statement sorry if I offend, parents in your area want something different they don't care about the OFSTED report and parents won't shift their kids because they're happy you are looking after them for whatever they need. ...*

This skewing of the understanding of parents is paramount when considering the purpose and the nature of Ofsted. A judgement based on outcomes for children judges not the school, but the wider social habitus of the child also.

H: *...it's not a fair system but it's the only system that parents have.*

To judge a school that must provide basic human requirements for children and support them as they recover from trauma, abuse, neglect, homelessness, parental substance abuse, transience, mobility, adoption, parental incarceration, and SEND before they attempt to teach the child and fill it with knowledge from a prescriptive curricular is perhaps to lose sight of the child and the outstanding job of care and nurture that the school may be providing in addition to their education.

A: *But that's judging the process as opposed to...*

C: *It is, I know that, but the outcome would be different depending on whether my kiddies have slept, been abused, I'm sorry (some children just won't get there no matter how much you've given them, they're children for goodness sake)...*

This systemic failure, acknowledged by the participants and discussed at length, highlights that, some ambitious Heads, perceived by the participants as “winning” Heads, those who are able due to their more able children fly to the top of the table (as opposed to the “winner” heads who are a tour de force for the children with huge need at the bottom of the table), treat their colleagues, and the children they serve with disdain at best and more often complete condescension and contempt. One possible causative phenomena of this behaviour is that whilst there is consistency of ideology in relation to marketisation, in terms of policy, neoliberalism can appear to have fickle loyalties. In contemporary education the ability to master market principles will inevitably lead to perception of winning, and inevitably *losing*.

This professional outlook may not be congruent with the personal nature of the Head, but is a consequence of potentially damning high stakes published data and the need for self-preservation, protection of the ego, and to ensure successful attempts at empire building or all three, in addition, possibly, to outcomes for children. It therefore takes a leader of great tenacity and

strength, with a good support network, to overcome not just public stigma and condemnation in the press, from government agencies such as Ofsted and the Regional School's Commissioner (RSC), and league tables, but also recruiting and retaining outstanding staff who can deal with the daily issues ranging from dissatisfied parents, to staff off work with stress, to children bringing weapons to school, to social services and health care expectations, to staff morale, to implementing new teaching and learning strategies amongst a plethora of others.

An observation that the type of "winning" Head described above is no longer part of the Headspace group, which appears to be entirely made up of "winner" Heads was certainly made by the participants, and a reflection on the fact that this could also be indicative of the leadership style of individuals and shared *holistic* values.

Winning Heads are less likely to choose to lead a school that will not enhance their winning reputation and indeed this is indicative of many teachers too. A conscious decision must be made as a teacher about the kind of school that you choose to work in, and an acceptance that a regular day job it will *not* be, should the decision to accept the challenge of a position in a school in a deprived area be taken.

C: *It's when someone turns around to me and says "we've got so many applicants for jobs" and you're like f...*

A: *Yeah because who would want to work...*

C: *It's a really, really tough school, I'll be honest with you and... if you want a 9 to 5 hah, bye, bye.[waves]*

Schools such as these work under far greater daily pressure than others, they must be prepared to deal with increased social, emotional, behavioural and educational needs of children, often with less money to spend as less parents want their children to attend the school, and with greater pressure from top down test expectations and judgements now of coasting schools.

The very notion that a school like this could be coasting is the antithesis of their lived reality.

C: *Your staff are going to be a bit more knackered, they're going to need more PPA, because you've got to make it better for them to come to your school, than somewhere else, this school you'll get a day's PPA a week in order for you to be able to do what you need to do and to be able to cope with what you have to cope with on a daily basis.*

The future of decreased funding is also looming, if schools in deprived areas struggle now, as evidenced in the transcript, then the likelihood is that they will struggle further in the near future when they will have even *less* money, *less* staff but the same social issues to contend with, simultaneously losing social worker and NHS support for the same reasons.

A: *And I think that's a real shame in terms of funding, what it will do is bring this divide in even more of if you're in a school where you can kind of survive with the funding you've got and still be a good school, you'll be alright, but if you've got a school that can't really survive on the funding you've got now and it becomes less it's going to become even more burdensome to try and get good staff and if you can't get good staff you're NEVER going to have any hope in hell...*

This notion of competition, key to the marketisation of education, clearly has huge negative implications, which are known about and well publicised yet appear ignored by the establishment.

5.10 Exposure Eight: Succession Planning – The Double Edged Sword.

Exposure Eight is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the fourth Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of succession planning was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of internal and external pressures, evidenced within the narrative, which decidedly revealed that the participants within this group feel that if Headteachers want to build their school based on excellent quality staff, then they must invest an inordinate amount of a decreasing budget in them. Naturally, as evidence shows, high quality teaching has the greatest impact on learning, so highly trained staff bring an inherent and distinct advantage to the school and the children yet drain depleted financial resources.

Whilst they remain in the school.

For young, ambitious staff, who are looking to gain promotion and increases in salary, a school that is struggling for money, possibly due to loss of children due to poor outcomes, or reduced national funding formulae, or that is in a deprived area, will not be a viable option. Particularly when the stigma of having taught in a school where published data is low, and Ofsted have negatively labelled the school, is difficult to shift. Therefore recruitment, in addition to retention, can be a significant issue in a difficult school, and also for sustainability at all levels, especially that of Headteacher.

C: *... If I can get my staff to a certain level of training and they then can actually do what I've asked them to do...my staff get to a point whereby, I've had all my training C thank you so much, I'm all ready to go off and do a cracking job somewhere else where it's going to be a damn site easier, and I'm like arh shit.. thanks for that, thanks for that!*

Schools such as these may have young staff, who learn their trade and absorb the training on offer, only to, as suggested in the transcript, abandon

ship at the first opportunity of a promotion in a seemingly easier environment, or a better school.

C: *They say oh that's what happens with RI schools, my school and staff are cracking but they've got this impression that life is easier somewhere else.*

Whilst there may be less difficulty to overcome in terms of behaviour and social issues in schools that have the best gradings from Ofsted, and are in the best areas, the issues to be faced by staff choosing to move are innumerable, such as Headteachers, alluded to in the previous Exposure, are less likely to be collaborative, unlikely to have a coaching ethos in which risk taking and innovation are the norm, often have more affinity to market strategies and a cut throat approach to education and employment akin to that expected in the business world. The reality then is that for many teachers, they are between a rock and a hard place, the decision is perhaps then not which school to teach in, but whether to teach at all?

5.11 Exposure Nine: Autonomy: real or imaginary?

Exposure Nine is the first of two exposures taken from the transcript of the fifth Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of autonomy was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of autonomy, evidenced within the narrative, which unequivocally, reveals that the participants within this group feel that any autonomy that Headteachers have is pretence. They believe that the core principles of a marketised and neoliberal education climate, and the way schools are under pressure from nationalised policy means that there is little scope for authentic autonomy.

H: *The school down the road did it to me, two of my children came the Monday before and they said they could go if they started on the Monday before the census on the Thursday (C: you can't do that!) they can, they've got the autonomy to do that and that's what I'm saying is it pseudo or is it whatever you want it to be it plays into your area.*

A: *But everyone plays a game because of the competition, we're competing for children.*

F: *It's not about the child, he had no friends at my school and yet he'd left and said goodbye to everyone, he had to come back on the Monday and go "oh hi" (C:oh god!).*

A: *We're competing with children because they're money: children equal money, units of cash.*

F: *It's shit isn't it, schools are becoming a business and it's just shit, sorry to swear but it just is!*

C: *No, it is. But I do think you will have people who will fight against it and continue to make the right decisions in the interest of the children.*

...

F: *Do we have autonomy? Is it pseudo?*

G: *I think it depends on your governing body to a certain extent, but I think the big picture is : no we don't.*

A: *So we've got autonomy to pay people what we want but we're not given the money to do it. [All: agreed] We've got autonomy*

to set the curriculum we want [All: but we're assessed on a very narrow high stakes]. We've got to teach the information they're going to test the children on.

G: *And that if you look at it, if you come back to our friend Ofsted, if there is an inspector or a team that has a particular preference for a particular curriculum or a particular strength in a curriculum they will, and they're not meant to do it, but they do discuss teaching subjects discreetly or having a creative curriculum and they do force that through, so you do feel very vulnerable in the way that you have to justify it.*

5.12 Exposure Ten: Ofsted, the life and death of a reputation?

Exposure Ten is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the fifth Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of Ofsted was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of internal and external pressures, evidenced within the narrative, which unanimously reveals that the participants within this group feel that Ofsted outcomes can have a great impact on reputation of both schools and Headteachers.

Interestingly, the belief that Ofsted and a negative judgement such as Requires Improvement (RI) is detrimental to a reputation is juxtaposed with the view that if, as a Headteacher, one can perform well, in a difficult school, with children at the centre of decision making, rather than system gaming, and gain the professional respect of colleagues, then the RI judgement is extraneous.

G: *I think the OFSTED ...does and doesn't affect your reputation ...I think for the lay person who just looks at OFSTED as the standard for categorising schools in terms of performance and that's all that they look at, I think it does...*

A: *So the Head of the school?*

G: *The Head AND the school but particularly of the Head, because your name is on it, I think if you are a school that has been struggling or has problems and you have the ability to have somebody come in and listen and see what your school is really like and I think that that can affect your reputation in a positive way regardless of either being in a category or having and RI judgement or otherwise and I think that is you as a Head being open to and being honest about what you're doing as a school and being reflective solution focused as a practitioner.*

C: *What do you mean by reputation... do you mean does it influence you getting jobs, does it influence those kind of things, because if it's about is your reputation influenced negatively for getting a job? we know a lot of people who have progressed very well doing you know, some people have progressed well into high jobs not doing a good job (G:*

absolutely) because they're good at interviews, are good at applications.

Again, juxtaposed with a school with an Outstanding Ofsted judgement that is ten years old in which the expectation from parents who view the school as a prospective destination for their offspring that the school will of course have remained so, is the view of the Headteacher who is aware of the many changes to the inspection schedule over the decade and is refreshingly honest when parents are astute enough to question whether the school would retain its classification today.

H: From a parent's perspective our reputation is key, [names her school] hasn't had an Ofsted since 2008...we have people who come and say you had an outstanding in 2008 would you be outstanding now? I say in all honesty, probably not, because the regime we were inspected on in 2008 has (A: *had four changes*) is nothing like the regime now and so in my heart of hearts we are a good school with outstanding features...

However pragmatic the participants are about the subject of a negative Ofsted inspection report, the fact remains that it is the belief of the participants that a Headteacher who is not perceived to have done a good job, is not well respected by their colleagues, may *still* progress to greater heights in the profession if they are able to perform well at interview: the notion of *talking a good game*.

C: Well you know it's getting virtually impossible now on the new framework to get outstanding so therefore it is actually demotivating for staff because we're always setting ourselves that challenge of that next step, next step, next step up (H: *but is it attainable?*) although we know of some schools getting it, but then let's just unpick it and say: are we all on that same level playing field (H: *no*) is everybody getting the same funding (H: *no*) and is everybody got the same quality of candidates coming into their area, all of those kind of things...stop paying attention to the league tables, they'll always be people at the top and they'll always be people at the bottom and the more we pay attention to that and the more we give it value

There is also the view that the outstanding category is not as motivational and inspirational as one would expect it to be. In many respects, it is empty narrative.

5.13 Exposure 11: negatives?

Exposure Eleven is the first of two exposures taken from the transcript of the final Headspace session of the year, in which the concept of negativity within Headspace was discussed.

This exposure can be considered under the theme of negativity, evidenced within the narrative, which unequivocally, and collectively reveals that the participants within this group feel that, aside from the expense of the meetings, the guilt felt about the time taken out of school, and potential ramifications for familiarity breeding contempt, there are no negatives to the group and indeed all have found it positively transformational and rewarding.

H: *I think the only negative thing for me in the beginning was how inadequate I felt...*

F: *But actually as we've gone on we've realised that it wasn't a true reflection of what it was like...there's a potential for it to be negative In that it could become a bitching session about life and a bitching session about headship and focus and I think you've got to hold dear the code of Headspace and for it not to... with a different group of people it could just become a spiral of 'woe is me'...*

...

B: *... I think there's nothing negative about headspace, I think the only negative is making sure that you can get here, when something comes into your diary and you can't make it, it's a long time before you see people that you know that you can be open and honest and say anything and it doesn't go out of this room.*

...

B: *I still feel guilty have a headspace afternoon off school.*

They believe that this group is the only antidote to the poison and toxicity of the marketised education climate.

5.14 Exposure 12: did you feel prepared for Headship?

Exposure Twelve is the second of two exposures taken from the transcript of the final Headspace session of the year, in which the concepts of preparedness for headship and sustainability of the role were discussed.

This exposure can be considered under several themes evidenced within the narrative, which definitively, and unanimously reveal that the participants within this group feel that whilst as a Deputy or Assistant Headteacher you have had many opportunities to support the Headteacher with whom you worked, NPQH training, and coaching from the leadership team of your school, nothing can prepare you for the role of Headteacher in a 2018 primary school.

F: *... is headship like you'd thought it would be? No it wasn't... I suppose I'd been protected as a Deputy...*

A: *...How could you quantify the fact that we've supported each other? There's no way of me saying (B: it could have happened anyway) it's not quantified, that's like an interpretive thing, interpret the quality of it but you know like we say children's progress or the data or whatever there's no way of quantifying...*

C: *You could do retention couldn't you?...*

A: *Yeah which is why I was interested before when F was saying in her first headship she didn't really have anything and so she left I wondered if she'd had something maybe it would have worked...*

H: *...I went into headship to get out of the school that I was in, I was in a situation where I was a deputy in a big school so the next step would then be a headship and I think I did go in with rose coloured glasses, we all did really... I walked in and I was straight into capability and parents and everything, you're just sort of thrown in so I didn't really have an idea of what it would be like.*

A: *Did everyone do NPQH (All: yeah) so we all did NPQH, and we were all Deputies?*

H: *But it still doesn't prepare you until you're doing it because I think like, you know how we were saying, Deputy no matter*

how much responsibility was given to you by your head you still didn't have that accountability the same as we do now...

...

H: *We've all done NPQH but actually nothing that I learnt on NPQH prepared me to be a head, at all **at all**. It was just something we had to do, it gave me the skills to be able to interact with people that I didn't know because I'm not good at that. But actually as the **role** of head teacher, when we did that day when we had those scenarios, (All: oh yes!) they were nothing...*

What can help you to survive learning on the job, and the onslaught of issues that are dealt with, particularly but not exclusively, in challenging schools is membership of a Headspace programme so that you can learn from a network and collaborate, thus ensuring that your mental health is saved and you build resilience enough to return on a daily basis to the job and continue to do so until formal retirement.

Sustainability for these participants was centred on building a team at school, whilst also being a proactive member of a team of Headspace Headteachers. In previous exposures it has been mooted that the reason that this group of Headteachers has remained together is that their leadership style and values are congruent and there is no geographical, or professional reason for manifestation between members of the commonly accepted competition between colleagues in the modern iteration of educational leadership practice.

C: *What amazed me when I discussed with you this morning you said you dragged yourself in, I was thinking the amount of people that wouldn't have been able to get up out of bed, that's the point where I'm going to say I'm stressed I can't do this anymore, your resilience as far as that is concerning is absolutely stunning. You know to fight through that and say I'm going to keep doing it but it's also balancing out upon actually having gone through that should be stopping at home...*

A: *I did it because I was coming here, and you know what I just thought I'll keep on going I've said it before, can't remember now, but I know everyone thinks I'm a bit mad marathon running, but I've done 2 now and I can honestly say you get to*

the last couple of miles and literally your brain is telling you just pack it in... and so for me I just calmly put everything into that analogy, everyone probably has their own analogy don't they?...

C: *What makes it sustainable... that's a big aspect of it, to me I think it's what everybody has done, you've built a team of people...*

H: *I think building a team...*

Therefore, whilst there is unequivocal data contained within the transcripts of the belief that Headspace has not just offered professional sanctuary at times, but also saved jobs and health, there are a group of newly appointed Headteachers who have not required the level of support offered by the programme and the majority remain in post in their respective schools. Other contributory factors to this have been alluded to throughout the reflexive analysis presented: such as, they do not work in challenging settings, or their values are not congruent with market ideology.

H: *I think it should be something that within the NPQH (A: do you?) I do, because it's so crucial, we all hear that a Head is a lonely job, and it is and you hear it on NPQH but you don't understand that actually (F: think it should become compulsory in your first 2 years of headship) I do, and we're lucky for all I dislike [names the LA] for different things they do see the benefit ... but I think it should be, headship and this support for new Headteachers...*

H: *I think Headspace is very different because you do your NPQH but Headspace as we say time and time again it's the only time when you walk through that door and you can be you as the Headteacher ... I just think it's crucial...*

The participants are clear advocates for the programme and its success and believe that more needs to be done to ensure that Headteachers are supported within their role. The voice of the participants is clear, they want the reality lived by each participant to be shared and made public, possibly to send a clear message to those not in their field that their job is more one of daily metaphorical skirmishes and literary brawls than one of early finishes and long holidays.

H: *... this is the reality of being a Head. Everything we have spoken about that will be in your research everything that we've spoken about and put into your report that's life you know, that is our day to day life, you get up in the morning, well the minute you wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning, whenever your brain clicks in. That's the reality.*

The views of the facilitator and both of the successive Headteacher representatives who have procured the programme concur with the views of the participants in terms of understanding the purpose and benefit of Headspace, and how it allows for the individuals to be real for a short time, rather than exist permanently in the hyperreal:

K: *I think for me it's about a space...where you can come together and create a group which is safe, where they can talk about things that impact on them as people, where the content of the... sessions is not Headteacher business, as they go to plenty of business meetings, where they don't need to present things that are **not** how they are, so they can just be themselves and that other people can be there to support and help them through issues so it's about engaging with issues in terms of how it impacts on the individual as well as how it impacts professionally.*

...

J: *... what's really tough for new Heads coming in is they haven't got the time or the space, time for reflection that really is necessary in order to have a sustained and successful career. The pace that new Heads have to act on is unrealistic really and what Headspace does is give them individually, and personally, time to reflect on how they are as a person and how they are as a leader, its that reflective practice, that learning which is underpinned by research that K brings in, by experiences themselves, by sharing ideas and other alternatives which helps them understand themselves as Heads as leaders and as people. Professionally it helps and impacts on how well the school is, well being and personal wellbeing, we talked about institutional wellbeing, we talked about that today about resilience, so it's also making sure that life back at school is good professionally. The other thing that it does is that in a context of school where they are competing against each other it builds up collaboration, for some of the groups that have been meeting before and continue to meet they are working together on key issues that affect not just them but their children and families.*

...

I: *...The original one we set up, there were two, two that should have come and didn't want to engage at all from the start and I always said it was interesting because they were the two that didn't last the year (A&K: as Heads?) yeah.*

Critical Analysis

The empirical evidence analysed in the previous section demonstrates the difficulties that can be faced by the contemporary primary school Headteacher as a result of many competing aspects of the neoliberal machinery, including the myriad policies implemented by central government, many of which have been delivered to school with relentless pace, and many of which have completely conflicting outcomes as evidenced in Chapter Two. These difficulties are synonymous with the perceived “synchrony of crises across the fields of the economy, politics and education” (Lingard et al., 2005, p.666), which account for the significant changes to educational policy since the 1980s.

How policy is understood and enacted, what is meant by “policy, how we should conceptualise it, and how we should research it” (Ball, 2015, p.306), has been key to analysis throughout this thesis. An instrument of successive neoliberal governments, policy has been used to foreground and make public what is going on in schools, and make accountable those who work within them. These aspects are among the central and enduring concerns of the field of education research, and this study. For Bourdieu, the influence of the state (and therefore the dominant class) in education is entrenched in the everyday activity of a school; therefore policy is an immeasurable indoctrination process, Ball (1994).

One approach, explored by Lim (2016), involves ontologically differentiating between policy as text: the processes of policy interpretation and implementation in schools; and policy as discourse: exposing the ways policy constructs subjectivity, and how this in turn becomes meaningful for those working at schools level and therefore creates the spectacle observed by the public (Ball 1993; Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012).

As a result of the increasing dominance of a neoliberal political agenda, there needs to be more research on critical questions concerning the role of the

state in producing, sustaining, and mediating education policies and their often contradictory discourses and manifestations, as exemplified by empirical data within this study.

Some of the most visceral pressures and difficulties faced by Headteachers, and in particular, those new to headship, analysed previously when discussing findings from individual sessions, fall under larger conceptual themes which have concrete links with literature discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Although all are interconnected through a common marketplace discourse, each element will be examined separately, although the very nature of education as a social enterprise means that it is affected by several overlapping aspects of life, and therefore is complex to analyse in isolation.

Several key thinkers have explored aspects of sociology, which help to frame understanding of the complexity of modern education, and how it is configured. As a result of the complexity in defining education and separating how it is influenced, by whom, for what possible reasons, and who is affected by the policy decisions made, it is difficult to identify a single philosophy or philosopher who can help unpick the concept effectively. There are elements of the work of several people in history that have specific relevance, however. Some of the ideas of those such as Foucault, Bourdieu, Debord and Baudrillard, built upon seminal thinking of those such as Weber, and Marx, will be examined below.

Overt instruments of punishment and surveillance in embodied neoliberalism: Ofsted; a Foucaudian analogy.

In our attempts to understand education, and where Headteachers are located within this concept, we cannot avoid the interconnected issues of power and social relations. Education is currently conceptualised as a positively transformational societal experience, (Ross and Van Willigan, 1997). As such it is inseparably connected to, and significantly determined by, economic globalisation, currently characterised by neoliberal ideology, in which if the individual accesses education in the right way, they will attain the

necessary certification to be socially mobile and earn a lot of money for themselves and the nation. The basis for this system is essentially credential conferring, which gives the appearance of a fair process of selection and reward based on ability. Apple (2017) offers an alternative that is more congruent with the experiences of the Headteachers in this study, namely that whilst there is no doubt that schools appear to be institutions concerned with economic and cultural reproduction, to analyse the effect of schools through input and output measures alone completely misses the impact of the cultural apparatus of either the society or the hidden curriculum. In fact, what this system allows is the legitimacy of a long history of social segregation whilst validating the pairing of school and societal requirements with class characteristics, (Van Zanten, 2005).

Part of the contradictory notion of neoliberalism as manifested in education is that it is the market that dictates the changes made, as discussed in Chapter Three, yet although education is now in a highly public marketplace, much of what occurs within the figurative walls of education is dictated by national policy from the government.

Foucault (2004), Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004a), Weber (1968), and Marx (Morrison, 2008) all share similarities in their focus on problematising power and whilst none devised a complete theory of education, the work of each offers stimulating ideas about modern society with regard to the aspects most closely related to education or that considerably determine its nature. There has never been a stronger argument to utilise theory developed particularly by Foucault (2004), such as surveillance, punishment, discipline, alienation and power, to examine some of the major machinery used to confine education into a quasi-political entity.

Whilst power is clearly central to theories of education, the argument of Bourdieu with regard to schools shifts his analysis towards a more Marxist viewpoint. This highlights the recreation of inequality through the misdiagnosis of cultural capital for individual ability, for example when the ruling class disguise their social inheritance when it is transformed into

personal significance legitimised through certification in school; and the later substitution of cultural capital for economic capital, (Lingard, et al., 2005; Van Zanten, 2005).

Foucault, whose work is almost exclusively concerned with power and its effects, assists understanding of how the currently dominant political concepts of education and learning, what I understand as the 'educational imaginary', are used in the organisation of people as a human resource; people who are essentially units of *human capital*. Neoliberalism, with which Foucault was intensely interested (Foucault, 2004) began to politically thrive during the 1980s and declared itself as one of the defining features of globalisation, Olssen and Peters (2005).

Foucault's works problematise normalisation. The influence of normalisation, realised by policy, technical vocabulary, jargon or by referring to a *truth* based on facts and common sense, has only been possible because this strategy appears to be neutral and unbiased. By simply asserting that SATs tests are valuable, that performance of teachers can be measured through pupil outcomes, which in turn can be measured in units, the practice and the language becomes integrated without thought or critical analysis of the underlying ideology. The invisibility of policy, which is, by its very nature, embedded in the cognitive organisation and daily activity of schools, is why it exerts such power over judgement as examined by Bourdieu (Van Zanten, 2005). In contemporary society, normality is coupled with performance and on the assumption that it is possible to predict performance, as explored by Kopeky, (2011), and it is this basis upon which expected levels and comparisons between schools are created. If a child cannot attain what has been deemed 'normal' in tests, the alternative is an automatic label of abnormal, coupled with potential blame on the school for not predicting that the child would not attain a normal level and addressing it appropriately. This despite the very nature of tests and their design built upon a percentage that must fail in order for the test itself to retain integrity as a measure.

The effects of the intensification of the performativity agenda, and how it is measured and controlled, on the overall well being of Headteachers can be explored through Foucault's (1984) philosophy of 'disciplinary regimes' and 'normalising judgements'. This lens substantiates understanding when attempting to frame the descriptions within the data of the Headteachers' feeling highly intimidated, decidedly anxious and certainly professionally compromised by the inspection process and the discourse that surrounds it. It is both anecdotal and known by individuals that a poor inspection can signify the end of a career in education for Headteachers, motivating them to self-discipline and self-regulate all activity in schools to ensure that targets are met.

Legitimate symbolic violence through performance measurement mechanisms reaches its zenith in the conferring of inspection credentials. An outstanding grade in Ofsted terms is clearly a mark of internal school efficacy and adherence to the regime, rather than the external influences of the social structure surrounding the school, and gives to the school and the Headteacher a cachet monopoly protected by the state in all but name. The converse is also true. Without the label of good or outstanding, there is little political protection. If schools cannot normalise themselves when compared against others, they risk becoming a target for unwelcome intervention and scrutiny so there is inordinate pressure upon Headteachers to ensure that the children who sit tests all attain in such a way that makes normalisation achievable.

It has been suggested that Ofsted has a positively transformational influence on outcomes for children in primary schools, "Ofsted to continue being a force for improvement", Spielman (2017) yet this is contested and disputed by the views captured by the data in the previous section, and published research (HCEE, 2017; NFER, 2016 for example) which is that it serves no real purpose in its current iteration, (Case et al., 2000). It supports and reinforces the power held by the dominant political classes and reinforces the disciplinary regime. One possible conclusion to be drawn, both from research and the data collected, is that the Ofsted apparatus in its entirety is little more

than an inauthentic, ostentatious, stage-managed, political nonentity fashioned and maintained to satisfy the imaginary scrutiny of the voting public. There is some evidence to suggest that it actually 'does more harm than good', Owen (2017) and Coffield, (2017).

It is clear from the evidence presented that the performativity discourse in which the notion of an outstanding grade appear to increasingly wield an almost tyrannical influence upon Headteachers, particularly those in difficult schools. The concept of outstanding education is an over used policy narrative in the UK, "rehearsed by school leaders, politicians, policy-makers and inspectors alike". (Clapham et al., 2016). To aspire to it, whatever it is, has become normalised because the alternative to an outstanding education is abhorrent – a *tolerable* education, an *acceptable* education? From exploring empirical data, and research by Clapham et al. (2016), it contests that outstanding has become a performative tool seized by the audit culture and ingrained in inspection regimes.

Foucault's notion of the panopticon, of what is visible and what is hidden, illustrates effectively through analogy, the imagery of Headteachers constrained in their role. The prisoners, Headteachers, can always be seen from the central control tower, Westminster, but through the use of screens, invisible policy, the presence of guards, Ofsted and other accountability measures, can be concealed. The power of the panopticon theory, therefore is in its limitless capacity for watching, or what Bentham (1995) terms the '*apparent omnipresence* of the inspector' (p.45). The panopticon concept, is economical because it works by the inmates self-policing and self-disciplining at no financial cost to the state. This self-policing is clearly evident in the data collected and exemplifies the internalisation and normalising of the mechanics of the new managerialist state.

Surveillance is a feature of the neoliberal governance of schools. Because the subject is essentially controlled by the knowledge that they are being watched via technology and regular data capture, and they live with the relentless uncertainty of knowing that almost unannounced visits from Ofsted

are a possibility, this surveillance is very successful. Naturally, the psychological intention of this system is the inculcation of fear, and the understanding that the subjects of surveillance, schools, would consider that their only plausible option was to conform. Thus each body would become their own supervisor, a role played by the Headteacher, hence schools must produce their own self evaluation framework (SEF) and internally devise methods of managing performance, for example.

D: *It doesn't matter who's got your back though... You sign on the dotted line on the contract and take that accountability on yourself, so you've got to have your own back, there isn't anyone else to have your back unless you've got the governors, the governors are there but they are not accountable like you are, it's on your Head...*

Thus, the educational chimera of the constant threat of the Ofsted gaze has become an inner reality of self-policing and censorship with the phrase “Ofsted will expect ...” regularly being used by leaders in education as a threat to ensure conformity, (Clapham et al., 2016).

The education system in the current social context, and how its ideology has manifest itself could be construed as analogous to the pre-eighteenth century penal system, in which punishment was ceremonial and focussed upon the body of the detainee. Whilst this may seem overly dramatic, in symbolic terms and congruent with the views of the Heads in this study, the metaphor epitomises how an Ofsted inspection can be experienced.

Public execution was a practice in which the authority and power of the King was reinforced, Foucault (1991). It is clear from the data that the prevailing view of the participants is that the performativity culture in which they exist, with Ofsted as the public instrument of punishment, creates a system where they feel that they are prisoners of state policy, and published reports exact the ritualistic punishment upon them as a deterrent to others for failing to uphold the expectations of the government.

A: *... his inspectors came to my school and said we want to give you an outstanding but we can't, because your attendance is this... Yet I employ somebody, and given what we said about budgets and funding, I employ someone to follow up on my attendance, her job is relentless...*

These expectations are in the creation of docile bodies; economically productive citizens; and a quantifiable extension of the nationally media delivered rhetoric of the government of the day, neatly compartmentalised and measured by tests.

The contemporary power of the government to essentially punish schools in which children perform poorly, relative to expectations, is based on the organisation and supervision of bodies in time and space, in this case the object of “political technology” Foucault (1991) to be worked on is simultaneously the pupil, teacher and school, which is then measured against a *norm*. The norm for the child is to attain an age appropriate level of knowledge in a test, through the normalised curricular of the school, in order that the teachers can be measured against the performance of the child and paid accordingly, by the Headteacher who is also measured in terms of leadership capacity based on the instruments used to measure the child and teacher.

The power of the government, and the techniques at their disposal to punish, depend entirely upon shared and widely accepted knowledge that is used by the government and indoctrinated into the masses to create and classify individuals, and schools, via league tables for example, and that knowledge obtains its authority from assured relationships of power and domination from the government. The ultimate punishment for a school is to lose its leadership and direction, its Headteacher, and Ofsted, armed with an arsenal of league table positions and test results, is the single best instrument available currently to do this. Tickle (2017).

The government, through discipline, achieves the creation of docility. Foucault (1991) argues that institutions such as schools behave like machines designed to control individuals; the success of this aim depends on

three fundamentals: observation, normalising judgments, and examinations, all components of new managerialist principles fundamental to the educational imaginary and discussed at length in Chapter Three.

In schools, the hierarchical observation is an instrument of discipline, and has become a mechanism of coercion in which surveillance has become subsumed into forces of production. Normalising judgments in schools, and between schools, operate in the same way that Foucault discussed discipline in the army, by rewarding and punishing through publicly awarding ranks. In the current educational context, schools are punished by being forced downwards in the national league table, which serves as a ranking system for schools that compete against each other, or awarded credentials by being moved upwards, Van Zanten, (2005). The concept of *normal*, which exists in educational discourse in relation to children and to schools, is one of the great instruments of power used in the neoliberal architecture of marketisation of the current system. High stakes testing of children, in order to create arbitrary judgements of schools is at the centre of practice that constitutes, and consolidates the notion that the body is an effect and object of “power”. (Van Zanten, 2005, p.674) reviews the rationalisation of social and state activities, as analysed by Weber and then Bourdieu, through the enhanced development of school bureaucracy, strongly linked to neoliberal demands for social and technical selection, as well as exertion of power, though strategies such as a sophisticated examination system.

Normalisation leaves little room for individual school autonomy and the micro-politics in schools around policy development and implementation. There is no public, acceptable platform for Headteachers to contest policy, hence the importance of the Headspace sessions in which the empirical data was collected. This is linked to the extenuating grip of power of the government and its determination to sustain the role of education in the maintenance of a habitus, which perpetuates the denial of equality of educational opportunity by refusing to acknowledge the role of cultural capital. (Lingard et al., 2005; Nandy, 2012). Schools literally and symbolically

support social order; they sanctify social division by etching it into education. (Wacquant,1997), as explored in Chapter Three.

Much of the concept of a positive economy, posited by Foucault (1991) is rooted in the concept that contemporary school timetables intend to force ever increasing, centrally prescribed, activity into a day, and therefore instil discipline, as has been observed from the data collected. This, combined with marketisation, and notions therefore of productivity and efficiency, mean that Headteachers feel acutely influenced by this expectation of doing more and it is a key reason for the anxiety around taking time out for their own development and well being.

Using a Foucauldian analogy, with reference to Ofsted, torture and execution are inextricably linked and are synonymous with a very public and ritualistic system of institutionalised punishment.

F: *If [names an LA] did something like this I would have had a much more successful first headship...he gave me that promise, four months later I'm out of a job and the LA are nowhere.*

This is something also explored by Bourdieu who developed his thinking based on the famous truism about the state from Weber, as possessing power to legitimately use violence, specifically symbolic violence, with schooling fundamental to the procreation of a national habitus, (Lingard et al., 2005). At the heart of all of these fields of thinking, however, is power.

This has been observed through history and is discernible by the manner of in which violence and torture, possibly execution occurs; commencing with a secret investigation, akin to the three weeks prior to a school becoming aware that it is due to be inspected, in which Ofsted can scrutinise the website and published information of the school thus creating lines of enquiry; this then progresses to the public ceremony of the execution, in this case the inspection itself and the ensuing report in which dismembered body parts are exhibited nationwide as a visible reminder to the nation of the

consequences of non-conformity. Again, this may seem overly dramatic, or fantastical, but in symbolic terms the metaphor epitomises how the effect of performativity instruments can manifest, as does the figurative description below.

The body, or the school, which is acted upon by the authorities in an aggressive way, provides the visceral link between these acts. Both measures also aim to discern a "truth" which implies that the Ofsted judgement exists beyond the moment at which the inspection was completed, rather than as part of a scene in the quasi-dramatisation, hyperreality, of the school's daily work. The secret investigation, enacted through a collection of evidence, establishes culpability, but the inspection and report publicises this in a toxic way, which clearly harms the Headteachers and their schools- for some, fatally as they struggle to recover.

Foucault's (1991) exploration of public execution is urbane and multifaceted. He posits that the ritual is dependent upon a specific hierarchical political position, in which a monarch is the authoritative head of state, and where public execution is required to maintain order, but the distance between executioner and monarch preserves the unimpeachable reputation of the monarch. This is broadly similar to the current regime of Westminster maintaining power over the education system through instruments such as Ofsted. There is no tangible link, no recourse to hold the government to account for the policy it inflicts upon those in education when the distance between the government and the individual school is so great.

It appears that at times the illusion of the underpinning doctrine of neoliberalism may slip, illustrating that the potentially fantastical representations alluded to above are much more of a hidden reality than it would be palatable to publicise - for example, in controversial comments angering teachers in 2011, Oliver Letwin, Coalition policy minister at the time, warned the public that it was only through lack of discipline and lack of fear that atrophy had occurred in this sector, evidenced by a lack of productivity in the previous two decades, and only fear of job losses would enable

excellence to be achieved, Taylor (2013). He expressed the determination and intent of the government to instil fear, and root out those schools who could not attract pupils, removing their Headteachers as an intended consequence of the policies implemented. The message was clear, schools had to attract pupils, the only way of doing this was that they had to ensure performance of children in tests to gain excellent Ofsted outcomes or face the very real possibility of not surviving what was in effect an educational cull. Naturally, this created an increased fear factor around Ofsted, in which the government offered a huge stick, and no carrot. This hidden agenda has come to fruition, more so since the advent of academisation in which academy leaders can dismiss Headteachers in a similar way to football clubs can dismiss managers, for publicly perceived poor performance.

Covert instruments of punishment and surveillance in embodied neoliberalism: performativity, marketisation, new managerialism and competition.

The traditional societal view of teachers, and Headteachers particularly, holding a prestigious position of significant status and professionalism compared to other occupations, reviewed over the last 50 years by Ballantine, Spade & Stuber (2017), has been contested in the last four decades as education has become located in a market place. Critical perspectives have explored how different aspects of educational practice may be perceived as contributing to the institutionalised control exercised by external bodies (Johnson, 1972; Grey, 1997; Hodgson, 2005; Smith et al., 2012).

Issues surrounding the notions of both performativity and professionalisation may provide insight into the simultaneous attraction to the role of Headteacher exhibited in the data, and the insecurity that it provoked in the participants, and offers an influential version of the reasons why they may rebel against the relentless slew of professionalisation initiatives embodied by neoliberal doctrine. On the one hand, those drawn to headship display a desire to be transformative in the lives of children, possibly from personal

reasons or from buying into media rhetoric that what education needs is good leadership in order for it to be fixed. On the other hand, once inside the system, and with the system absorbed by them, some Heads, as indicated by a number in this study, feel repulsion at reductive adaptations of education, which they are duty bound to uphold. Whilst generalisation in a study this limited would be difficult, it nevertheless evokes questions about whether this discord could form part of the causation of the publicised issue in recruitment and in particular retention of Headteachers.

Subversion and containment were concepts introduced by Greenblatt (1988), which have subsequently become well-known. Montrose (1996) suggests that these terms are often used to refer to the aptitude of the dominant to engender sedition, which it can then use for its own purposes. In this case, and evidentiary from the literature review in Chapter Two, the government wished to impose New Managerialist principles upon education, they therefore suggested to the masses, who voted for them and exercised choices within the school system, that there was a crisis in educational standards and only the instruments of the market could fix this crisis – those exemplified by performance measures, both of teachers and also of children taught, that could compare and analyse improvements. Therefore the subversion was both produced and contained by the dominant, the government. It is ambiguous whether successive governments have callously converted the masses to their way of thinking, knowing that creating a market place would only serve to dismantle localised power and return it to Westminster, or whether the government themselves are merely agents of a new global hegemony relentlessly pursuing efficiency and improvements based on market place principles.

It is possibly then the government, rather than Headteachers, who need to accept the evidence of the 40 year experiment in market place ideology which is that auditing teaching isn't actually possible, (Coe, 2017). Yet they expect Ofsted, Governors, and Headteachers to prove that it is: through relentless book scrutinies, lesson observations, and collecting progress and attainment data. All of which begs an uncomfortable truth; why not trust

teachers again? It is ridiculous that Headteachers are required to establish a paper trail that proves learning has happened, for government auditors who were not present, yet this is the accepted practice of the day.

While onerous, there is the inaccurate and incorrect perception that the increase in paperwork has had a role in helping Headteachers manage poorly performing staff through capability procedures, this has not been the experience of the participants in this study, nor perhaps of those who participated in the research cited in earlier chapters on a national scale.

It is unsurprising that Headteachers find themselves confused about the expectations of the role: to observe the government antipathy towards schools, the professionals who work within them, and the daily pressures that they are under as a result of national policy is to envisage this. The idea that the way to improve schools is to put fear into teachers and Headteachers (Boffey, 2011) isn't a new one, it still prevails although it is indeed monstrous, juxtaposed with this vision is rhetoric centred around autonomy, and increasing respect for the profession. Maton (2005), argues that the concept of autonomy, the corner stone of Bourdieu's entire relational approach, needs to be further defined: 'positional' and 'relational' autonomy (p.688). This lens is helpful when analysing the current view on primary school autonomy as, they have no positional authority, policy is determined by those largely located within politics rather than primary education, and they do in fact have considerably less relational autonomy because of the toxic impact of the logics of the market place.

Just how authentic the autonomy that schools have is debatable but clearly it cannot be supported by the data collected in this study, despite the views expounded by Gibb (2017). It is the view of Gibb that autonomous schools are best placed to raise standards for their pupils, in the best interest of local communities. The reality is that the academy programme has removed the accountability of local schools to the communities that they serve, "In England, however, democracy in education has suffered. Academisation has changed the role of local education authorities and the accountability of

schools to their communities”. (Dutata, 2017, para.4).

Despite Coe (2013) proposing that there was no empirical evidence with regard to what works to raise standards, Gibb (2017) suggests that it is the reforms of the current government, that have now created that empirical evidence base to support this belief. Perhaps the acceptance that there can be no universal answer to standards, and a recognition that society is made of groups of children who do not arrive at school with the same experiences as have been normalised by the government is simply too unpalatable. “A socially just education system would recognise that what happens outside the classroom matters as much as what happens in it,” (Nandy, 2012, p.678), and would therefore involve the removal of normative judgements invented. Yet, this is an unnerving prospect for the government who cannot envisage an alternative to the educational imaginary that we currently embrace.

Herein lies the conundrum for Headteachers and the cause of much of the anxiety exhibited in the evidence collected in this study. The government tell the populace what they think, and those in education disagree. Some of the later works of Bourdieu have relevance when reflecting on the policy cycle in education over the last four decades, in the context of globalisation and its wide ranging legacy (Bourdieu, 1998b, 1999, 2003). This discontinuity and discontent is at the heart of every issue raised in the Headspace groups.

Gibb (2017) believes that having wrested power away from LAs, neither education faculties of universities, nor LAs who are conducting authentic research for research sake, as opposed to that conducted with a potentially arcane political agenda, are able to advise on pedagogy. Indeed, contrary to the evidence gathered by several banks of research over a number of years, Gibb (2017) states publicly that as a direct result of reforms of the government, schools have been empowered, and teachers have taken back their profession. For Gibb (2017), this power, or autonomy, is something that Headteachers are simultaneously influenced by, and influence with. Although it may sound paradoxical, it becomes more compelling to consider that autonomy and various constraints seen within education are not mutually

exclusive (Olssen, 2010). Freedom, or autonomy, therefore, must always be exercised under certain conditions, which are not determined by the subject, thus the subject is both active and governed (Fejes, 2008).

Gibb's view that the academy programme allows localised decision-making has truly been contested by the reality that the LA have no say. Westminster are still producing national frameworks for education; it is possibly more accurate to say that the government have greater power over schools than ever.

Gibb (2017) expressed the view that the government dominated education system, underpinned by neoliberal policy, has given Headteachers power to decide on school improvement, yet this is governed in reality by Ofsted and national high stakes testing instigated by Westminster. Thomson (2005) demonstrates how Bourdieu's theoretical and conceptual repertoire offers a method of theorising a doxa of narratives and self-maintained truths, illustrating how educational policy is a means of codification, and currency exchange within society.

Gibb (2017) also believes that the current accountability system gives schools the opportunity to maintain high standards; that the current market place encourages improved teaching; that intelligent systems increase the quality of curricula and facilitate the retention of staff, when there is no discernable evidence to support this. There is both empirical evidence gathered for this research, and also in research such as that of Bernal (2005) to support the notion that in a market place, in which parents are given the choice, those with more resources and greater cultural capital, such as middle class families, often send their child to school they deem better, no matter its location; but, further down the social scale, mobility is less frequent and parents find the complexity of the choice confusing.

Finally, Gibb (2017) asserts that foundations of government policy on reforms to the curriculum, assessment and accountability were to ensure that every child received a high-quality education. It is apparent, however, that

the high stakes tests, the acknowledged practice of off-rolling, and the lack of special schools and funding to support those with additional needs contradicts this view. Neoliberal, market place ideology places great emphasis on the economisation and efficacy of education, but what is less overt is that it is also a mechanism for separating able students from less able ones. Those students for whom adaptation to the requirements of the environment, the market, is not a problem, profit from education. Those who cannot access the market are abjected. Therefore, what we have, rather than a universally transformational experience, is a powerful adaptation of meritocracy oriented towards the individual who has the requisite social capital and ability, Kopeky (2011). Further research has found that another disastrous outcome of the current policy on assessment is that better qualified or more experienced teachers are allocated to classes that would be sitting SATs, and that were given much more professional development opportunities than others. This stratification within schools, limits opportunities for staff to work together and learn from each other and is another toxic outcome of using pupil performance in high-stakes tests as the sole means of judging school and leadership effectiveness, Ashadi and Rice (2016).

Schools are judged based on the outcomes and progress they achieve for their pupils, which the government hope will give a truer picture of the achievements of schools for parents to choose, yet clearly this is not the case. The government wants to do even more to attract teachers to schools in challenging areas, but the emphasis in the accountability system does nothing towards breaking down the barriers to attracting teachers to where they are most needed as is evidenced by the data collected in this study, and more recently in the national press, Woolcock (2018).

Debord to Baudrillard: spectacle to simulacrum and beyond

Debord (1992), Baudrillard (1994), Kafka (1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2014), Foucault (1984), and Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004a), all shed some light upon the complexities of the phenomenon of Headteachers expending great energy to publicly portray versions of reality,

or spectacles. The manifestations of the spectacle, therefore, are complex and manifold but analysis will demonstrate that all are instruments of professed transparency and disclosure as part of a performativity culture inculcated by neoliberal orthodoxy.

The exhausting cycle of creating sensationalised representations of a reality, or creating the spectacle, is at the heart of what most contemporary Headteachers must concern themselves with because creating, and marketing the school brand, the act of leadership, creating a corporate vision and strategy are essential acts in the free market where their work is located. A Headteacher must readily create and support “pseudo-events, pseudo-action and pseudo-structures”, (Alvesson, 1990, p.373) because they are phenomena through which people's impressions and definition of reality are manipulated and as such, are therefore, important aspects of modern leadership in an organisation. Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017) believe that “Debord’s arguments about appearance, visibility and celebrity are echoed in the way organizations increasingly focus on their brand, image, impression, and reputation,” (p.1625), suggesting that this is an under-researched topic, despite the fact that “as the boundaries between fact and fiction, reality and representation, substance and appearance become increasingly blurred, questions about the production and effects of spectacles seem more pertinent than ever”, (*Ibid.* p.1625).

In the case of such a spectacle, the existential Kafkaesque crisis that some of the Headteachers in this study clearly feel is related to the rhetorical polemic; to what extent does their security rest on their ability to create representations that mirror the educational world faithfully? To what extent does their security rest on their ability to conceal the educational world under a glowing veneer? To what extent does their security rest on their ability to narrate reality altogether? This was explored earlier through the work of Foucault.

For the participants in this study, the notion of the spectacle provokes reflection on the discord between the concept of what is understood as real and what, and how, this is represented. Debord (1992) illustrates that

representation is not real, rather it is *surreal*, requiring significant analysis, as reality is often modified by spectacle. In this case the pseudo autonomy exercised by Headteachers is the mask of “total choice”; the contradictions inherent within the limited choices that Headteachers have, compared to what is portrayed publically, embodies “the real contradictions that are repressed”; and the spectacle really is an “image of happy unification” which masks the clearly enunciated fear expressed by the Headteachers in this study.

“Behind the masks of total choice, different forms of the same alienation confront each other, all of them built on real contradictions which are repressed ... the spectacle is nothing more than an image of happy unification surrounded by desolation and fear at the tranquil center of misery.” (Debord, 1992, para. 63)

Bridging this divide, between real and spectacle (Alvesson, 1990; Shapiro, 2013) occupies much of the time of Headteachers and is seen as vital in maintaining the educational imaginary for spectators and stakeholders, and also protecting the employment security of the agents, the Headteachers. Alvesson (1990) explores the preconditions that must be present within a system such as education in this instance, in order for “the appearance of images as objects of systematic control and instrumental action in organizations” (p.373) to become normalised. As expressed earlier, these instruments and the jargon associated with them, has facilitated their public acceptance and integration into the control mechanisms of the educational imaginary and its actors.

For Debord, a post-Marxist, the spectacle obscures a harsh reality, in the case of primary education, in which social exchange has been converted into commodity exchange, as dictated by the market. This commodification of the young is made palatable to the populace because it is obscured and glossed over by political rhetoric, rhetoric that inculcates the control machinations expressed above; therefore, Debord’s (1992) work was, in this case, a continuation of Marx’s theories of capitalism.

Appearances in education are never unbiased, reality as perceived by the Headteachers in this study is 'ideology materialized', (Gilman-Opalsky, 2011, p. 70), and therefore all spectacle must be fabricated with the interests of the dominant at heart, such as Ofsted, as the spectacle is the vehicle for portraying specific interpretations of reality which must support the educational imaginary and protect those within it.

Spectacles such as these, 'reflect the ideological position of those who have architected society for their own interest' (Gilman-Opalsky, 2011, p. 73), in other words, the successive governments of the last forty years who have embraced neoliberalism, the ruling elite, have created something reflecting their interests.

By concealing reality through spectacle, and 'encouraging passivity and consumerism' (Markovitz, 2011, p. 4), the concept of education in its current iteration contributes to the subjugation of citizens; contributes to repressive social construction, creating docile citizens; contributes, therefore, to depoliticisation. '...the purpose of spectacle is to redirect citizens' attention from structural inequalities to spectacular events designed to subdue social criticism', (Kersten and Abbott, 2012, p.324). For Headteachers preoccupied with creating a fabulous show, there is little time to protest against injustices within the system. Similarly with parents concerned with the perceived poor state of education; the league tables as presented; or Ofsted reports as published; there is little reason to question or challenge these notions when their main concern is naturally their child's location within the system.

Headteachers invest an increasing amount of time, and resources, as is evidenced in the data, into creating information whose primary focus is to give positive impressions to the audiences the school wants to impress Alvesson, (1990). This audience includes Ofsted and the expectation is that the outcome of their visits, such as reports, which are associated with spectacle creation, must reinforce the positive impression that the Headteacher has created (Boje et al., 2004; MacIntosh *et al.*, 2000; Uddin et al., 2011). Boiral, (2013) is disparaging about the principle of transparency,

something Headteachers must concern themselves with also, suggesting that it is congruent with a functionalist and positivist paradigm, according to which corporate reality can be accurately embodied through a performance metric. Rather than transparency, research suggests that capitalist spectacles are achieved through a theatrical performance that both legitimises and rationalises, which will be explored in the next section, such as that observed for example in a school undergoing an inspection.

The concept that there is no hidden reality concealed by the spectacle is a provocative postmodernist position located in the work of Baudrillard (1993), who proposes a more extreme ontology that develops the Marxist notion of materialism explored by Debord (1992).

It was Baudrillard's contention that reality is eternally unknowable and therefore must be invented as imaginary. Much of the corporate strategy that is a result of new managerialism is an example of the intertwined simulations that bear no resemblance to reality, and which can therefore be considered hyperreal. The power of these strategies lies in expressing fabricated realities *as if* they were real, regardless of the fact that most people understand that they are not. The government creates situations, using the media as a tool for this to be shared rapidly in order to garner votes, "to make us believe that there are 'problems', to be solved in the 'real' world", which posits the suggestion that there is in fact a 'real' world (Grandy and Mills, 2004, p.1165). Citizens, have access only to illusion and simulacra, which have become customarily accepted as reality because to consider otherwise would be chaotic and anarchic. If an alternative configuration of education was to be mooted, there would inevitably be chaos, as the idea that without a free market education is *poor* has been solidified in the west in the last four decades.

The most fascinating aspect of this assumption of hyperreality is that spectators, or citizens, do not unintentionally mistake illusion for reality, indeed they are fully cognisant of the fictitious nature of spectacles, yet seem to be unperturbed by it. It is this lack of concern for the publicly created

imaginary of education that prevents revolt by most people, including those who work within schools, as they belong to a “conspiracy of silence”, Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017) and this prevents policy makers from being forced to make the changes necessary to make the role of Headteacher either an attractive, or a sustainable one.

Alvesson and Spicer (2012) suggest that this can lead to functional stupidity, in which workers suppress any doubts they may have to gain reward for simply conforming, being docile bodies. Highly trained and intelligent school staff will refrain from publicly using their cerebral capacity to think critically as a necessary strategy to support routinised, normalised organisational functions. In a forum such as Headspace it is possible for true, subversive acknowledgement of the hyperreal, the spectacle, to be voiced rather than, albeit cynically accepting government engineered fantasy. There was speculation in the sessions that those Headteachers who had remained in the group, did so because they shared these subversive acknowledgements and needed a forum to discuss them whilst perhaps those who chose to leave were part of the fabric of government engineered fabrications of reality and did not question it.

C: *You celebrate that though, that's what you're going for and you've promoted it- you've stuck it on a banner, you've stuck it in the outside world, actually you've something you've got to keep achieving haven't you? Year after year after year you've got to be top of the league and that's what the issue is. We play that game. Don't worry about what they're producing because they are always going to do that.*

E: *So is that the system then, that is failing [C: it's the OFSTED system] it's the OFSTED system and the league tables where people do feel pressure, but then it's still a choice. You choose what the ethos of your school is. If you are strong in your abilities, this is a children's centre, this is an inclusive school, no matter who you are, what you are and how you are. You may not necessary win the vote to be top of the league table, but then you've got happy staff and very happy children.*

F: *Some people think to win (E: is the most important thing) well is that you are first- you are top.*

Performativity, explored in the next section, must be considered in relation to the ability of the spectacle to create a different world (Loxley, 2007) The physical act of uttering something reshapes the object being talked about (MacKenzie, 2006; Roberts, 2009), in the case of this study, the utterance of Ofsted and the creation of another dimension in which Ofsted has a positivist value attached to it could be an example.

- C: *I was gutted that Ofsted didn't give them outstanding, because they'd pinned all their hopes on it and that kind of really shook them to their foundation (who's that sorry) and shook her and she thinks her whole career has gone.*
- D: *But that's what she attaches to it and different people attach different things to it. Like with [names a school] down the road they're good at the moment, I think they're outstanding though, but if they get the outstanding stamp it will be detrimental to us because the kids will shift in that direction and parents in our area, and I don't want to cause any offence here, parents will look at Ofsted reports and will attach some importance to it for their choice, kids in your area, this is a sweeping statement sorry if I offend, parents in your area want something different they don't care about the Ofsted report and parents won't shift their kids because they're happy you are looking after them for whatever they need.*

Performativity is therefore a manifestation of how the spectacle can shape identity, relationships and social interactions with inadvertent consequences. Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017). In this case, behaviours in school, methods of working, work load, curricular, policy architecture and application are all consequences of the Ofsted spectacle narrative.

Performativity theories have been advanced from initial theory of Austin (1962) through the work of Butler (1993) in how discourse creates subjects and socially acceptable norms. Understanding of performativity supports awareness of the relationship between the spectacle and the organisation, and hence the confused and confusing issues faced by the Headteachers in this study. Within the theory of performativity, the spectacle, rather than masking reality, continually creates reality, forming knowledge and how knowledge is used, through attempts to represent it (MacKenzie, 2006).

Representational instruments of power, existent within the audit culture of new managerialism (Power, 1997), constitute that power and do not just represent it. An over-reliance on auditing and reporting have created, in the last four decades, governance from a distance. This in turn maintains the illusion of neoliberalism, explored in Chapter Three, in that the Government do not interfere with anything, instead they let the market dictate changes.

Gond et al., (2016) in developing theories from Austin, Butler, and MacKenzie have demonstrated how performative representations, such as audits, inspections and reports, are pivotal in the regular recreation of organisational reality (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Thyssen, 2005). Naturally, this exposes the fact that the realities and spectacles are never consistent, uniformly constituted or rational, negating the purpose of tools of organisations such as Ofsted in trying to bring about some degree of consistency to examining schools.

Performativity can unleash organisational transformation as it produces 'unintended effects such that the making visible starts to change that which is rendered transparent', (Roberts, 2009, p.958), which in turn can change social, economic and cultural relations (Markovitz, 2011). Schools are hyper vigilant about the necessity to stage manage their public appearance, Headteachers are preoccupied with what to expose and what to hide from the gaze of the public, and manage what is visible, (Flyverbom et al. 2016).

The Marxist origin of Debord's spectacle assists examination of how publicly accepted notions of reality, particularly in relation to primary schools, are politically created to mask social inequality and inconsistency. Baudrillard's development of the spectacle as simulacrum challenges the notion of organisational stability, illuminating the innumerable ways in which the spectacle-simulacrum becomes inherent within the unstable arrangement of society. Although cynical, it is a compelling analysis of how the spectacle-simulacrum supersedes reality with hyperreality in ways so perfidious that citizens discount manifest discrepancy, and actually embrace illusion.

Kafka: Alienation, subjugation and chaos

Alienation and justice

Camus (1991) suggested that the anxiety, confusion and hope of Kafka, exemplified through his alienated perspectives, anticipated the alienation of the masses in modernity, and therefore the spiritual lives of humanity. The daily existential struggles experienced by the participants in this study result from struggling with the increasing complexity of contemporary education, with its maze of rules and regulations, many of which are contradictory. In the same way that Kafka described the plight of his characters from the perspective of modern citizens who come to understand that their fate is not in their own hands, but determined by the ubiquitous unbreachable bureaucratic machine, galvanised into operation and governed by procedures which remain opaque, spectacles, even to those carrying out those procedures and an overwhelming force to those being controlled by it, Benjamin (1980).

This understanding of bureaucracy suggests a hierarchical system that reflects the spectacle that it is always perfect and never, therefore, makes mistakes, Warner (2007). For example, behind the illusionary public edifice of altruistic socially motivated service that is education, loiters a self-serving market-orientated bureaucracy, Boa (2002). This is less Weberian, in that it does not depict a mundane administrative bureaucratic normality, but does describe more of a chaotic Kafkaesque scene, more in tune with the data gathered in this study.

In this way, Kafka anticipated the reality of organisational life in environments dominated by bureaucracy, such as schools, and caricatured in his work the capitalist manipulation of social representations that can be observed today and with which primary Headteachers must grapple (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986).

Whilst Weber, (1968) believed that bureaucracy creates efficiency, it is Kafka's insights concerning the appropriation of time by the organisation and the impact that this has on health which are prescient given the data gathered within this study (Löwy, 1997). Sullivan and Gershuny (2004), see this occurrence as "the problem of the maintenance of consumption expenditure in economies where leisure time is shortest for those who have the most to spend" (p.79), a characteristic paradox of neoliberal market places.

Kafka (2003) embodies a clearly defined literary representation of 'alienation' through the salesman whose work reduces him, by its futility, into a mere insect. Much inference could be drawn about the congruence observed in the data about the desperate struggle of the Headteachers to cope with the demands of the audit culture in schools, the pressures that this places on personal life and health, against the backdrop of the societal context in which they find themselves, and the life of Kafka which influenced his view of organisations (Pelzer, 2002). To develop this analogy in education, it is teachers who are treated as drones in a hive, their existence serving only to produce honey and protect the queen; in a similar way that teachers are merely to produce docile citizens who work for the protection of the dominant power in Westminster.

Both Kafka and Weber were well aware that humans can be consumed by the organisational socialisation of routine, and that it is important (Sandberg and Targama, 2007), Kafka, (1999a) however, anticipated how these routines can become toxic in an organisational dystopia (Parker, 2006), this is comparable to the current primary school setting and educational imaginary on a wider scale, indicated by the recruitment and retention crises.

It is clear that the understanding of power and surveillance, normalisation and performativity offered by Foucault; social capital, policy and rationalisation offered by Bourdieu; the spectacle offered by Debord and the hyperreality offered by Baudrillard all compounded in one work place, such as a primary school, could explain some of the reasons why Headteachers'

experiences border on the madness implied by the satirical work of Kafka and fly in the face of the benefits of bureaucracy advocated by Weber.

In the age of new managerialism, performativity, the audit, standardised tests, surveillance and league tables, what cannot be measured does not have value; it is therefore understandable that there is a continuing interest in bureaucracy (Reed, 2001) and the post-structuralist concerns of power and its relationship with knowledge, explored in the previous section on Foucault. If Headteachers do not sustain the imagery that education can be measured, and prove that they are measuring it well, what role to they have in it?

Conclusion

This research set out to answer the question:

To what extent does a structured programme of peer coaching support newly appointed Primary Head Teachers?

In order to do so, several subsidiary research questions were posed:

1. What is the current context of primary headship in the UK?
2. To what extent do notions of sustainable leadership support the development of primary Headteachers?
3. What, if any, universally accepted measures are used to define professional success for Headteachers?
4. In what ways do primary Headteachers judge their professional success?

A traditional way of analysing a thesis would be to answer each in order, and produce answers individually, but to a certain extent that does not acknowledge my principle findings. I accept that I have taken a reflexive position, born out of experience and compounded by the findings in the data that this thesis presents, which acknowledges a negative perspective of the influence of neoliberalism on contemporary education.

The empirical insight offered by the data into the significant issue of school context as an effect of how a school performs in testing regimes is substantial, given that the current audit ethos tends to disregard such matters. It is clear that context greatly impacts on how schools realise and negotiate the audit culture. Continued efforts to disrupt this disregard for context through research that critically examines and illuminates the constraints schools face and increase schools' capacities for responding to this policy expectation, such as Headspace, are clearly vital, (Keddie, 2013).

Neither Politicians, nor the DfE, and not even Ofsted, have the capacity to provide answers to the profound questions of our time, ostensibly because the questions that children need answers to are too controversial and cannot be distilled into attractive headlines for the media machine as has been demonstrated in this thesis. As a poor substitute, although clearly with the best intent, successive governments have set an agenda for our education system that has led to an ever-narrowing definition of children's progress and therefore individual child, teacher, school and leadership success. The education system, I posit, in its current iteration, is both out of touch with the modern world and I believe is a factor in the erosion of not just positive childhood mental health (as explored earlier in this thesis) but desire to remain within, or even be a part of, particularly for school leaders, contributing to the recruitment issues faced in this area (HCEE, 2017; NFER, 2016, 2017).

If we are to accept, therefore, that neoliberalism has damaged education through marketisation, and accept that there is an inherent madness within the current configuration of education then we must accept that some individuals are abjected as a result of indoctrinated fear, of not having the capital to successfully access the market place. What is most striking, the main finding of this research, is that I am unable to answer any of the questions without thinking about power, manipulation, and the idea that considering the educational imaginary requires examination of why certain people invest in, what can at times feel like, the madness of it and what is at stake if they do not.

The idea that I could answer any of these questions, all of which have become politicized, without understanding the hyperreality of the contemporary configuration of education, would ignore the empirical experience of Headteachers, and children, and also the main findings of this research, which are explored in the previous chapter. To respond to them effectively involves understanding the ways that power, accountability and the socially constructed nature of the institutions within which education is produced are affected by the neoliberalisation of education.

It is therefore possible to get lost in believing that each of these questions has individual validity, that each can be investigated and that this is a worthwhile endeavour, when actually, what has been investigated appears to be a Kafkaesque madness.

As was demonstrated in this research, our education system has undergone monumental transformation in the past four decades, the manifestations of which are only now beginning to have a noticeable impact. “The system is far more complex than it has ever been, and democratic accountability has been greatly affected.” (Dutat, 2017, para. 1). Curriculum, inspection and accountability instruments are more firmly controlled by Westminster than ever, and the complexity inherent within the system is such that only the elite can affect any change.

Successive and successor governments, as illustrated within the body of this thesis, are able to use this configuration of concentrated power to reconstitute education in the narcissistic image of the party, and successive parties, regardless of political bias, have dogmatically followed neoliberal doctrine – for schools, and their Headteachers, this means new curricula, new accountability procedures, new inspection regimes, greater efficiency, and less money. Yet, as has been shown, all that these changes serve is political convenience. They have not served education, in any way, despite us perpetuating the imagined order – headlines contain the same rhetoric now as they have for decades about poor standards and quality of teaching.

For the most part, people in our country can afford complacency, whilst policy is working for the majority, for the majority of the time, however, when the system stops working for an increasing minority, as it has done in recent years, it becomes obvious that we are powerless to effect change. The notion of sustainable leadership, and why this is such a contested concept in current educational domains, was discussed, thereby invoking the pressures inculcated in neoliberal ideology, enacted as punitive accountability and efficiency instruments.

In schools which face challenging circumstances: poor SATs results, a poor socio-economic catchment area, a poor Ofsted report, for example, sustaining that leadership is crucial. Schools facing the biggest challenges, are those in need of the most tenacious leadership and that leadership, as has been evidenced in this research requires the support network that can facilitate the continuous and strenuous efforts required to safeguard the imaginary order that is education.

The data has exposed that the bias towards individuals who can access the mainstream, those who can take advantage of opportunity, as they have enough cultural capital to do so, is evident. It shows that Headteachers who choose to work with those who cannot access education as a positively transformational experience are vulnerable and must try to survive despite the system in operation, in order to support the most vulnerable. It shows that Headteachers without the resources and skill to survive this and create the spectacle that masks the reality, are often abjected, and their careers ruined.

With the cessation of the NPQH, there are only the Headteacher standards as a rough measure of Headteacher capabilities yet the media cite Ofsted, league table position and published data with which to judge professional success, often with disastrous results. The Headteachers themselves would judge themselves differently it would appear from the data, and these judgements revolve solely around protecting staff and children, and ensuring that children are kept safe, nurtured, and taught to the highest level.

This passionately held view of education as a social enterprise clashes with that discussed in Chapter Two and exemplified by Wilkinson (2007) who suggests that commercialisation has created an imagined order of education which functions in a "cultural vacuum abstracted from any socio-historical context and divorced from any sense of meaningful professional idealism." (p. 380). It is this continual misalignment of values, between some groups of

Headteachers and policy, which means sustainability of leadership is at risk without a programme of support in place, such as Headspace.

The application of capitalist policy provokes this “polemic” (Kopeky, 2011, para. 43), in the unsophisticated intellectual world of neoliberalism.

Therefore, it is necessary to conclude that the conflict and negative consequences illustrated in the data are a result of the neoliberal ideology becoming embodied practice.

The analysis in Chapter Five, shows that neoliberal policies have been fully integrated into national and international policy-making over 40 years, and demonstrates that education has been fully incorporated into power and control mechanisms of government and has therefore become an instrument to co-constitute a society in which “freedom is confronted with control, inequalities and risks” (Kopeky, 2011, para. 43).

Education in its current iteration, therefore, can be viewed not as the individual transformative experience that the Headteachers within this study appear to wish it to be, but as the final step in creating governmentality in a neoliberal world (Keller, 2011, cited in Kopeky, 2011, para. 43).

Kincheloe (2012) states that,

“The call for high educational standards in a global economy is touted as new and innovative educational policy but even a cursory survey of twentieth-century educational history will reveal numerous times when ‘innovators’ instituted such reforms only to watch them fail. When educational purpose is defined as the process of training the types of individuals business and industry say they need, educational quality declines. In this situation reformers attempt to transform schools into venues for ideological indoctrination and social regulation while reducing teachers to deliverers of pre-packaged and homogenized information. Even by traditional canonical modes of evaluation, the sanctity of education is debased.” (p. 3)

It is within this historical and social context that this research took place and the findings, although subjective, support the view of Kincheloe (2012).

Moreover, the data demonstrates a core implication: that education needs to

be fundamentally reconfigured in order to be capable of resisting or tolerating political power overload and “dystrophic” ideological foundations. (Hodson, Martin, Lopez, and Roscigno, 2012, para. 1).

Within current political and social discourse, any alternative to, or modification of neoliberal ideology, that has permeated all aspects of global life, appear unconscionable. The almost silent acceptance that there is no alternative to global capitalism, is a stark contrast to the political landscape of forty years ago, when debate about the future still contained speculation about how the world would look in the new millennium: communist, democratic, fascist, socialist, or capitalist. Today, “the paradox is, that it’s much easier to imagine the end of all life on earth than a much more modest radical change in capitalism.” (Gerrard, 2015, para. 1). What this implies for Headteachers, as demonstrated by the data, is that they must find alternative and arcane methods of coping with the implications of the neoliberal system as they manifest in current primary education.

And yet, the vague recollection of the optimistic progressive reforms of the 1960s, and 1970s has lingered, juxtaposed with a contemporary landscape in which educational policy predicaments are debated through the lens of fierce market competition, efficiency, individual capital accrual and increases in nation state productivity.

In the name of social justice and equality, the data would suggest that these Headteachers *are* looking back nostalgically at the momentum that was cut short by the Thatcher reign when ‘the idea of public schools as places where young people from a range of varied backgrounds and experiences can mix and learn to appreciate and respect differences was starting to be recognized in public and policy discourse’ (Reid, 2002, p. 575).

There are movements, initiated by some with a vested interest in education and being undertaken by them outside of the school day, which confront the social inequalities faced by our children and the teachers and Headteachers who work with them. These are the practitioners who, at grass roots level,

are keen to be the instrument of change at local level and through the use of social media, not available 40 years ago to help mount challenge and galvanise those who oppose the direction of travel, are sharing their views and raising questions about practice such as exclusion, 'off-rolling', the provision for SEND children, the use of Ofsted reports to condemn schools to ruin being but a few of the issues they challenge.

This research posits that rather than complacent acceptance of the ideological hegemony Greenblatt (1988), Headteachers are indeed best placed to challenge expectations of education, and therefore their role, and in so doing, challenge the containment and expectations of new managerialism in education. But this comes at a price, as is demonstrated in Chapter Five. Headteachers must ensure that they are actors within and producers of the simulacrum that enables them to both attempt to keep the insatiable educational machine satisfied, simultaneously behaving in a socially just way. This involves a repetitive and exhausting disassembly and reassembly of self that requires a safe outlet to explore. The Headspace programme offers that opportunity and therefore sustains the challenging role that some Headteachers have.

It is through research such as this that the complex, and ultimately impossible Kafkaesque madness of the current educational simulacra is enacted and the role of leadership within it can be exposed; a role that exists within a precarious capitalist bubble. Nandy (2012) describes: "A system which is based on competition for resources or school places creates winners and losers and where children are concerned that is unacceptable." (p. 677).

Giroux (2016) believes that "... school teachers ... are a national treasure and may be one of the last defenses available to undermine a growing authoritarianism, pervasive racism, permanent war culture, widening inequality and debased notion of citizenship..." (para. 3).

I believe that the Headteachers in this study would concur, yet it is the

restriction imposed by government that mean they are hindered in this cause, and expected to produce docility: both within the children they teach and also the staff, including themselves. The intent to defund and blame educational practitioners for the demise in standards ensures that the public believe the spectacle created and support increased accountability, which in turn strangles the opportunity of teachers who can't solve societal problems, but try to educate a generation of children to consider them. It is children who suffer under the tyranny of prescriptive educational curricular which could be considered a form of “disciplinary repression” (*ibid.*, para. 4).

This thesis does not extol evangelical objection to capitalism in bringing together the perspectives of the Headteachers and analysing them; it simply exposes the reasons that they have felt at times like characters in a Kafkaesque charade. It also suggests that only through programmes such as Headspace can leadership in such times and with such constraints be made sustainable.

Giroux and Evans, (2014) believe that in our contemporary world, “Citizens...are now reduced to data, consumers and commodities and, as such, inhabit identities in which they increasingly become unknowables, with no human rights and with no one accountable for their condition.” (para. 9). In a school context, this is more evident than ever and forms part of the constant tensions experienced by Headteachers and evident within this study.

This research shows that Headteachers expect, and should be held accountable for, high standards, but they should be given authentic autonomy over their schools, and rather than decrease funding in schools, they should be a focus for investment. It shows that league tables and high stakes testing do nothing to raise standards, or improve social mobility or aid collaboration, and only serve to increase marketisation of education and naturally the divide between those who **have** and those who **have not**.

The Headteachers in this study refuse to treat children and their education as

a market place commodity and they recognize that the “crisis of schooling is about the crises of democracy, economic equality and justice”. (Giroux, 2016, para. 9).

In conclusion then, the Headteachers in this study have found the Headspace programme, a structured programme of peer coaching support for newly appointed Primary Headteachers, essential; fundamental to their development and increased resilience in what could be argued is an impossible system. They have survived, despite the system, through diverting limited financial resources to ensure that they have the necessary thinking time, breathing space, and collaborative support in order to be able to do their day job, a job that they are passionate about, and not abandon it.

The recommendation is clear: as long as schools operate in the way that they do, this kind of programme is essential, particularly for those in deprived areas or challenging schools. Rejecting the neoliberal vision for education is not an excuse for accepting the mediocre; it is in fact a call for excellence, for restoration of faith in our educators, for radical change suggested by Mortimer (2013).

This study matters for education because the leaders who choose to work in challenging environments are those who we should, as a nation, embrace as doing the most difficult, and powerful of jobs in the most needy of areas. It is they who can make real changes to the social fabric of our country and engage the most disenfranchised – if given the requisite financial and public support. Implementing a programme such as Headspace is good for many reasons but may assist in retention of Headteachers in the profession, and also the sustainability of their roles, enabling reflection and development that can be taken back to schools and enacted there to create a culture of support and growth, rather than competition and fear.

Appendix A

Table of themes covered across the sessions

	Lifeline	Safe haven	Armoury	Directory	Internal vs external pressures	Collaboration Vs competition	Values	Succession Planning	Autonomy	Preparedness	Negatives
1	X	X	X	X							
2			X		X						
3		X				X					
4		X					X				
5		X			X						
6			X		X						
7					X	X	X				
8					X			X			
9									X		
10					X						
11											X
12								X		X	

Session 1: What is Headspace and what is its value? What is Headship in 2016?

14/10/2016

Duration: 1:10:24

F: *Headspace is a life saver.*

C: *When you're initially starting (as it's a group of Heads who have started headship together, which is very, very difficult, and very complex), it allows you to be able to share, in a protected group environment, the aspects that you're finding difficult and also celebrate and share things that are very successful.*

A: *Did everyone start at the same time?*

Group: *no [all confirmed when started].*

G: *I walked into that first one and I was like oh, my god! You all totally know what you're doing and I was like, I feel like a baby, I felt like I was completely out of my depth, even though it was my second chance at Headship, I still thought: no I'm in the wrong job!*

A: *What made you think that, though?*

G: *I think the level of intellectual talk. Do you know the way you were all so confident in what you were talking about and doing, I was just sitting there and freaking out.*

F: *I felt that when I walked in that first meeting, that I could quite easily have turned around and walked away. I am not the calibre of everyone else in that room. They are going to find out actually that I've been given the job under wrong pretences.*

A: *Had you just started in September?*

F: *I started in September, and I think we'd only been... it was in the first half term wasn't it?*

A: *I started the January before as a Head so I'd been in post two terms before I came in the September so I knew fine well that I was no expert, what was staggering it that you all thought that people who had been there a while knew what they were doing, because at that time in the September I was pulling my hair out because I had that massive issue with my governors for the whole term and it spilled into when you guys joined in the January so I had half a year... so I certainly didn't feel...*

F: *Who was the Head from [names a school]?*

A: *She didn't come back did she? [names a Head] from [names a*

school] never came...

F: *I don't remember him... [names a Head] who was that?*

A: *[names a Head] she stopped coming.*

C: *She went off to have a baby and she's only just started coming back into the [names a cluster of schools]. She came that one time but I think she's just been out because of personal issues.*

F: *She knew what she was doing, she was dead confident.*

B: *She'd been acting Head.*

C: *She'd also been the year before. I think what everyone assumes is that everyone else is in that position, but I knew the amount of people that said, you're all faking it first. When you're doing it at first anyway, and that's even as an experienced Head, people have said that, at one point someone is going to turn around to me and go 'why are you there'. I just assumed that everybody was the same as me, you know I wasn't turning around and going "oh wow I think you're all brilliant" and that's no disrespect to everybody. I was going "they're just as clueless as me". But what I was really grateful of was that opportunity to be able to hear other people's experiences so that when I could go, "Oh my, look at all this stuff that I'm dealing with, well I'm dealing with this but I can see in each and every school people are dealing with all these different things and I can see...". yeah all of these people in the room, that's why you're a Head, because actually you can deal with it and you can sort things out and there's very few people that who can be in that position. It was that opportunity to be able to learn, as well, and "oh my god, that was an experience, what did they do...oh well that gives me a little bit more armour". I think we've talked quite a bit about armour and Teflon, putting those layers on, you know we were going out pretending we were Heads, but within this space we could open it up and go "and this is what this looks like and it doesn't feel like it's perfect" because I have to pretend to everyone else that it is, because I have to give this impression.*

D: *I agree with that, I describe it as a safe haven. It's a safe environment for us to share our views, where we know that this has happened, can we problem solve this, can you help with that, and celebrate the positives as well, but it is definitely a sanctuary, safe haven where we can all get together, similar mindsets where we can think, well how can we help each other, because I felt that coming into the first Headship and half way through the year that it was a little bit like 'bump' that's your school. Where's the support? Do you get any support from the*

local authority? Do you heck, you get none, none whatsoever.

F: *I think that's unfair, because I've been in the LA where there isn't support at all.*

C: *There isn't!*

D: *I didn't get any support.*

A: *Do you think it depends on your school?*

G: *It depends on your school massively and I think the term support is probably used quite loosely. As a Head that came in later, and then came in with a school that went into category after a fortnight, I had masses of support. Was it the right support? Did it do me any favours? Did it help me?*

A: *Did you feel protected, did you feel like someone had your back, when you were doing all that difficult stuff, all those difficult jobs you had to do to get your school out of a category did you feel like the LA's got my back?*

G: *No, I didn't feel the LA had got my back, I felt that they were ticking boxes to get certain things in place. I felt the diocese had my back.*

A: *Someone had your back and it was the diocese, because you were a church school.*

G: *Someone in the Diocese and to be fair I did feel, although there are conversations we've had around governors, I did feel in those early days that the governors had my back. Remember when I had the meeting to share with parents three months later that the school had gone into a category, and it was just horrendous, all my staff were there, all the governors were there, union was there, other colleagues were there, so I felt very supported in that, but it was a very, very lonely place to be. I think referring back to Headspace, I would concur what you said that it was safe and I could come here. It sounds really strange but when I'm at school I'm the Headteacher and I'm also [names herself] here I'm [names herself] and my job is as a Headteacher and we share that and it's very different. I know that I can be honest, I can cry, I can laugh, I can shout, I can say "I've really messed up", I can say "look celebrate this with me, aren't I fantastic?", and it's really safe. I felt the way that it was set up allowed me to trust all of you very, very quickly and whether that's the same in other Headspace groups? Whether that's just the nature of us as a group of colleagues?*

F: *I think a lot is down to the facilitator.*

- B: *And I think credit to the local authority.*
- F: *That's why we are sitting here, because of the LA who ploughed money into it.*
- A: *It was more I who fought for that, because each year we had to be advocates for it, didn't we? We had to say to her so she could fight for that, because when you're thinking about where the funding goes at Local Authority level, I'm sure they feel pressures like we do, where to apportion the cash. If I is fighting saying "there's not much there for Heads, they don't have a mentor anymore like they used to in the old days, this gives them a chance to share and learn".*
- F: *If [names an LA] did something like this I would have had a much more successful first Headship, because I was offered by [names an LA], I was offered [names an LA representative], but I had to find that myself - I had a list of people, but I had to put all the things in place, and [names an LA representative] I think his name was, who was [names an LA representative] equivalent, he came out in the first term and he said "you're a baby Head we will not allow your governing body to bully you like the previous two Headteachers". And he gave me that promise, four months later I'm out of a job and the LA are nowhere.*
- C: *They haven't got the capacity to be able to do it, and that's what I feel about LA, its the capacity to be able to support you. Basically if you're ok and they think you're doing a decent enough job then you're support is you don't get support, because in their Head you're doing your job that you should be doing. To me, the support I had in a 'requires improvement' school... well...wasn't. I had a SIP coming in who was basically just going "yeah, yeah it's fine", and pat you on the back, and then as a requires improvement we then had our regular meetings which it allowed you to articulate the things you needed to articulate but I don't think there was a very clear judgement call on it, so there wasn't that ability for people to say yep and I think this is good, this is what this looks like and yes I am... you know? I had absolutely brilliant support from the maths and the literacy (A – Specialist teachers?) specialist teachers which was really, really great, but I know as soon as I get my 'you are good' that will all go. It will all disappear so you haven't got that regular ability to be able to check, other than what you put in, and what I want is that triangulation of other schools to come in and do that internal rigorous review with me where we can hear and take it and do all of those, which is a lovely model from MAT, and I know I've seen that in other academy chains as well. Focus do that, and I've really*

benefited from it.

A: *But who had your back, C, when you were in RI? Who had your back, D?*

D: *It doesn't matter who's got your back though, there's a difference here for me, Headspace is a supportive group and it's supportive because we are honest with each other and sometimes it's refreshing to hear that someone is having an awful time and it's worse than yours, that's great, because in every other setting I go to, people fake it like they're the hero and they offer solution after solution when you're sat round a table at [names an LA] about how great things are, but it's not the truth. This is where the truth is, so it feels supportive but none of us are accountable for each other and I think our expectation is that none of us are accountable for what goes on in our school, but I think as a new Head, you've got support from the LA but there was a sort of belief that they were accountable in some ways, but they're not. You sign on the dotted line on the contract and take that accountability on yourself, so you've got to have your own back, there isn't anyone else to have your back unless you've got the governors, the governors are there but they are not accountable like you are, it's on your Head and I don't think that's made clear.*

F: *I kept waiting for this night in shining armour - was it [names an LA representative]? No! Was it [names an LA representative]? No! It wasn't. Was it [names an LA representative]? No, it wasn't. Was it the next person that [names an LA representative] passed me onto? No, it wasn't. Nobody was helping me and I was just completely and utterly lost and I had no new Heads to talk to, nobody to say you need to go to that person yourself, you need to pick up the phone and sort it out, I was waiting for somebody to do it for me and you're absolutely right D.*

A: *Who do you go to, if you don't know who to go to though?*

G: *That's what I had in a different situation though. I was in a school that was in a category though, [names an LA representative], was there in school all the time and I must say in those early days he was very supportive he would always ask about my wellbeing. That kind of went to the side the minute I got us into RI, there are other people within [names an LA], who I have to say would text me, they'd pick up the phone and say "just checking in G". I have, because of the situation my school was in from the get go, I knew who to go to. But, for instance, when we went to the coasting school system, which I was one of those, you go and you're a good school an*

outstanding school when you're in that situation and they say to you, what can we do? I knew more than most in that room that I could go to [names an LA representative], for Maths and I could go to [names an LA representative], to rigorously go through data or whatever, but that's because of the situation I was in and the authority had to be seen to be doing something for my school in a category and I think that's where support is a little bit loose and I have now learnt to say "I don't need that, I don't want that, I'm actually not having that, but I really do want to hold onto this little bit" and for me it's the Maths support. I don't want the literacy because I think I've got better in my school. The early years? Very nice, come and have a chat but there's a blurred line to what I actually need my children to be doing and what they think should be doing and it's ok to come in and do a review, however I want something to say right this is what I'm going to run with, and for me as a church school that's where the diocese is supportive, because the diocese for me is solution focused. It's about my school, my setting, my staff not a generic LA review, that was a very generic... and I have had conversations very recently where they would say we'll come and do another review but it will be more bespoke to you. Three years in nearly, not so sure that's how I want it to be played out thank you very much, but I wouldn't have done that three years ago.

- D: Is that about you or about the LA and the support that's been offered?
- G: There's two ways of looking at it. I think it's about them being able to sit alongside me because my Ofsted window will open this academic year and it's an opportunity for them to find out about school other than data or SEF but actually to have a working knowledge of school. I think if I choose to take the driving seat, they would allow me to do that but that's me having the confidence to do that and it's me knowing those people well enough but I do also think it's ticking an LA box.
- C: To me it's completely that. They needed to have a record system to show that they supported us but the stuff that we were doing was the stuff that we were driving anyway. We were driving maths. I had to fight on the maths because they were then making the staff say "oh, what should we be doing?" Same with the argument with the EYFS. I could see my children needed a certain type of thing, repeat, repeat, repeat and exposing them to a lovely environment was not going to make progress because they weren't going to have that at home. There was a fight there, there was a fight with the maths but the literacy was fab because I could just take her along with my talk for writing and she was happy to just support and to add the extra thing we needed to go with that, But I was

already clear with it, where I wanted it to go, it wasn't them coming in and going, we think you should go this way.

F: *I would agree, it was exactly the same thing in my school. Have I ever had an LA review where they've told me something I don't know? No.*

C: *They shouldn't be doing. They shouldn't be doing. I think it's if you were clueless.*

F: *But that's what they seem to be wanting to do.*

C: *Absolutely, but I think that's what the division is when looking for an academy chain, which is a small group of people who can be responsible for each other and for us to have that ethos. I need someone who is leading on pupil premium to help me, so I've got a CEO who leads and basically national leader in order to. He is setting the agenda as far as pupil premium, I know when I come to Ofsted they're going to have my back. I know when I've come to Ofsted previously I've not had someone fighting for me, as far as going 'and this is your evidence based...' now that's what I'm expecting to come to my next Ofsted not just the CEO but a couple of the Headteachers who've been in my school, sat with me, because at the moment Ofsted are driving the agenda, Heads should be driving the agenda.*

D: *I think there's a difference for schools, because we've all worked and taken on schools that are in a mess and there's a one-size-fits-all offer from the LA who they support and in that gang of people whose schools are in a mess are experienced Heads as well, and you'd expect any LA or any support network to put in place stuff like a teaching learning review and check what they're doing and hold them to account in a different way, whereas we haven't got proven capacity to show improvement, so they put that whole, dump the load on you, and see what happens, but we're all capable of doing that job, we've improved our schools on our own, we don't need that support really, we don't need that level of scrutiny and feedback, we can steer it.. there'll be some incapable experienced Heads who aren't doing the job properly, they will have a different outcome to what we've had and perhaps not as good at doing the job as us new Heads are, but I get that the LA have to check and to make sure that we are doing it and then they back off quite quickly once they realize that actually they don't need the support and they just walk away, and then you get a bit of consultant support or whatever.*

C: *There's a proper learning community though, as schools we should all be continuing this research based approach that*

goes and what is best practice not, you're on your Billy own and look I've found this really good and this is working for me, and that whole ability to be able to share that practice. We know that there is a wealth of research out there that talks about good practice that we know, well we've known that for the past 20 years but why have schools continued to do this, this and this? Because that's what we've always done.

A: *Do you know why though, when you think about it, you've got a body of research as you rightly say that people know about for example attachment theory and how that impacts on children and how they learn in school. Everyone has known that now for quite some time, but the policy of the day doesn't reflect it, so when you think about headship today, now that we do, think of the policies that are imposed on us today, do they work? Do they reflect current trends on children and in families in society and do they reflect all the body of research that's out there, do they reflect it?*

B: *No, because it costs money to put those things in place doesn't it? I think Headspace for me when I came, because I was from a different authority you were the only people I knew really, so if I needed to get in touch with the LA I'd get in touch with all of you and ask who do I speak to about... because I didn't know anybody else (A: so there's a sense of isolation?) yeah, and the authority offered me this, which was great, but that was it.*

D: *I would concur with that, and that was my point earlier on is that because you're a good school, your deemed good, everything's good so yes the Headspace is fantastic for the LA to offer, that but that's it.*

C: *I was the point of contact, because she wasn't, she was the person wasn't she that could direct you to the right people she was very human, absolutely fantastic [all agreed] we were very lucky to come into Headspace at that time; I would doubt that I would have the same relationship with people who've taken over.*

I: *I also think because she'd been a Head, and she was a bit older than all of us so she'd got more experience behind her, she'd had a lot of life experience so she could appreciate that we don't just work in isolation with other teachers - we're human beings with families (C: it's an isolating job isn't it?) the job isolates you but your life pressures as well as your school pressures can have an impact and I think what I did really well was recognise that and she also had an understanding of... when I asked before about does the policy reflect the climate she would say it's not all about SAT's scores it's not all about APS, it's not all about data, OFSTED have now said that in the*

HMI briefing, well hallelujah, we've all known this because we could [all talking] but the question is... and he said that yesterday does everyone subscribe to it, he wants that consistency, but the answer is no, they don't because how do you measure that a child is all of a sudden coming to school happier, how do you measure happiness or how do you measure somebody who's prepared to eat now [laughing inaudible] but you can't put a percentage on it.

- D: *They're there in school? Attendance goes up, that's probably one bit of information.*
- F: *But the parents, their attendance won't go up, that's not necessarily an indicator is it?*
- A: *So they put these policies in place, but none of the policies that are in place actually fit... are fit for purpose.*
- C: *Yeah, but what they're saying now is that's soft data. You've heard them say again and again and again: your evidence is up to you, we're not going to list it, but we know that pupil voice will enable us, so we can case study somebody, and we can feed it back.*
- A: *Ofsted are looking at that now, but the policy of the day... where does the policy of the government say, we want soft stuff and we're interested... it doesn't, the policy of the day says you're a coasting school unless you get this and this is what we now say is school readiness, what's been inspected and what we're being told to do by policy, they conflict.*
- C: *That's when you're looking at... all that I seem to get from the local authority... and I've benefited absolutely loads from them, but what I was getting was...they're looking towards the latest information that comes up and they're wavering, and they're trying to look at Ofsted report...look at this pattern now that's happening, they're not driving the agenda, they're not at the forefront of it...I want to be something that's at the forefront...that's actually saying 'this is my research base, all of our schools are really confident in doing what they're doing'. I had an Ofsted whereby, he sat there and said well what do you think, do you think you're RI? Good? I said "I don't know" and he said "well at the moment I'm thinking special measures". You know, we're not there, but I can't tell you because I'm trying to unpick what all of this means and I don't know what it looks like, and I had a lot of experience with going to other places and all of that, but I hadn't got anybody who had got that gumption to turn round and go: it's this! They would say...well based upon the data that you've shown ... me you're indicating..., they wouldn't turn round and go... and even when*

we had the focus review they don't say well we think you're here. They won't say that, because they then get it in the neck... whereas I have got part of the group [Focus] that will say that... and I want that.

F: *The diocese will. I am so lucky in the last six months as well... I've been like, what is the difference between a church school and a community school? Am I any different? Do I want to go back to being in a community school? And since I've done the Christian Leadership course, maybe it's just sitting here listening to this as well, I'm so proud that I'm a church school because it's a safety blanket and we get so much from being a church school! So last week we had church Head's school meeting and we were coming up with all these things we wanted to do to work together, soft academy role, just helping each other, what can we do, and _____ was there and she was like, but we haven't got any money, so we were like, you don't need any money because we would all put in a small amount to work together in order to facilitate it, and that's something the LA would never do, even if it was raised at [names an LA], it's so big.*

C: *I think that's why I was so determined that [names a cluster of schools], Heads would work and that we would get the schools together and that we would do that, and facilitate that, and get it growing, and get everybody in there, because that way we can all say what are we all thinking, because we're all benefiting the kids of [names an area]. We're not...the days of saying well it's all about my school... as long as I'm better than you lot...it's not about that and it can't be because again we have got to set that agenda and I think we've got to get out of this...well what are they looking for because people have chased that and it's not brought anybody any happiness, our schools, us as professionals. That kind of respect that is deserved and will help us to continue to build. It's all well... you set the agenda and we'll run to it. It can't be that can it? You know? We can't be chasing somebody else's story, we have to kinda create our own story in order to say... "and this is what quality education looks like: and we value this, and therefore this happens, and our outcomes are great because of that." And when he's talking about those small movements, it's tougher moving a kid from here to here than it is from moving a kid from there to there [indicating with her hands distances]. We know that, and we know that they're not fed and they're abused, or whatever. We therefore know that we are putting this package in place to protect those children, and at last it feels like things have moved towards, that they've moved towards a point whereby we can influence education, as long as we grab hold of that and don't allow people to keep wavering us... It bothers me because I think the people by themselves, which for the big LA*

that feels how it is, haven't got that kind of lead, haven't got people grabbing hold of it saying, "This is what we're doing! This is what it stands for! This is the way!"

B: *I think they've fallen into the trap that lots of people in lots of areas of life have fallen into, and a lot of it's down to money as...*

A: *I was just going to say doesn't it all boil down to finance?*

B: *It's all down to finance but the difference...part of the difference I feel between the diocese and the LA is, when I picked up this school with its 'good' label it, was definitely an RI when I got there and the LA knew that. I phoned up and said I need some help with this because we've got Ofsted pending at any time. I was just an acting Head at the time, so I said I need some help with this, let's get moving and get this school back to where it should be, and they said "well we can put you as a vulnerable school and we can give you this, this, this, this but that will have alarm bells for Ofsted" so without that tag I couldn't have that level of support [A: I felt exactly the same way] I think they put sticking plasters when it gets critical rather than...*

A: *I called it a reactive support rather than proactive and that's what got me in trouble, like you got your big email today, [nodding to G] I got into trouble for asking for help and saying we're due an Ofsted...*

B: *I got the help. I got help for me as a Head to put things in place as a new Head, acting Head to put things in place, but not to actually...you know the things I did in school I had to do by myself because I didn't want that label to flag us up. Whereas the diocese they knew exactly what was going on in that school and said right come on let's get this sorted and I had more support from them, they didn't come in and give me the English, Maths type things that I needed, but they came to me and said we need to do this, we'll give you this person, they'll help you, I had to go to the authority but they still knew that our data was falling, they still knew that we were in that vulnerable position and I think it's down to funding [A: it's always down to funding] If they could do that preventative bit when they knew schools were sliding then you wouldn't have so many school in crisis.*

C: *But I think if you'd had that regular review, what you'd got set up as far as church schools, we all go, we all inspect as a group of people, we do our internal review, that allows that to be self-sustaining. It's not self-sustaining at the moment because all that happens is someone comes in criticizes you, you spend so much time defending and feeling bad about the*

fact that someone's said something bad about you and it's gone out to everybody. Whereas you can be open and self-critical, can't you? If you're kind of going with a group of Heads "Ok we need to be focused on this, you tell us warts and all, we'll try together and look at some solutions". You've gone into the process of reflection and yet improving it as well. I think one of the things that Headspace has allowed us to do is to hear things within a group quite regularly, whereby you go...that's a trigger, oh my goodness, if your starting to think about that and your starting to think about that now I know what I need to do. That was typical of...I was quite merrily drifting along as part of being part of the LA it was only when you came in [gestures at A] and said oh were going to have a meeting, it's about academisation, do you all know about this? And I though gosh I hadn't realised how swiftly things were moving. It allowed me also to keep things up to date because as new Heads we are very interested and on the ball and want to be in the forefront in decision making and all of those things and you're actually in a group of people who were able to do that and go...have you heard this is out there and that is out there, and then have a group which you can actually go to and bounce ideas off because around this table you could do that, and help your decision making before you go on somewhere else. I think that really, really helped to know what are you thinking [gesturing at D], what are you thinking [gesturing at H] when perhaps in an open forum...well I'm like an open book anyway, I'll tell everyone what I'm thinking because I'm not a game player, but I know that other people might go...well I'm not going to tell people that I'm interested in an Academy.

- A: *That's something that echoes what D said earlier, you're not a game player but there are people that are, and like D said before...what did you say again D?... They're faking it out like they're wonderful...?*
- E: *It's the image that they're trying to portray to the public and if you had to go into the school and look at it deep down it's not necessarily factual.*
- D: *You meet so many people that aren't actually interested in you and they offer you support and advise and lovely things, lovely snippets but it's not actually real. It's not designed to help you it's designed to show off what they're doing in their own school and that's what I found really unhelpful because I just came away from meetings in groups where I thought there's just no benefit to it, it's great sharing good practice but you're not, you're just bragging, there's a difference between sharing.*
- E: *I suppose with the ASIA we have, I had an ASIA come in, and was it really of that much benefit for me? No not really!*

- D: *It was for me, and maybe I'm speaking a little bit out of turn, it was a bit of a tick box exercise, they come in find out about your school and that's it.*
- F: *At that point I agree with you, but when Ofsted came my ASIA turned up and backed everything I was saying and stopped me going...not just on his own but because of the team work and because of the communication prevented a school that could well have been a special measures because of data, my phone call on my very first day was your looking at requires improvement at best, and I said "bollocks, see you tomorrow, we're a good school" and he left saying "you're right it is a good school, it's not requires improvement but you can still be a better good".*
- E: *And that's the experience I had with the ASIA, so I can see possibly the...*
- A: *...It's about the quality of that person, and in terms of capacity the LA don't have a suite of people now, there is no range, there's very few, very limited, and that's the number of people they've got and that's it, and I'm not saying they're all great or they're all bad. I've not got much experience if I'm honest I've only had one, but I think it always comes down to quality, you don't know who you're going to get.*
- H: *It's the same as headship, whether you're an Academy, or a church school or a community school doesn't matter, it's who is leading that school, it's the personality.*
- C: *The grading for you school shouldn't be on your ability whether you're a good orator, whether you're good, on the spot, pulling out, I've got this, this and this...you were saying that you can remember all sorts of stuff, I can't, you know, and I get so excited!*
- A: *I've only been out of my school this half term three times. One was on Monday because I had to do level 3 safeguarding refresher, one was yesterday for HMI briefing about Ofsted and one was today, that tells you the value I put on Headspace. I've not been out of school for six weeks bar those three occasions. So, on Monday I was at safeguarding training and the woman who led it was a TAF leader and she's brilliant and she was talking to you about all the jargon you put on a MAR form and you should be putting this and you should be putting that, and I had to say (and the room was one third Head teachers, two thirds different types of practitioners), and I had to say "listen, when I'm filling in my MAR form I've usually got the phone under my ear, I'm like this on my computer filling it in [gestures*

typing whilst holding phone hand set under ear], someone's knocking on my door, I've got a child coming to show me their work, and I've often got a parent angrily glaring at me from my actual office window" whether you give the child help should not come down to how well I have filled in the MAR form the jargon I have used all two thousand characters in my explanation or not, if I'm making the time to fill in the MAR form, from one professional to another, it's because I'm really concerned about someone and I'm telling you something needs to happen, and she said "you're right". The only analogy I can give you is, I'm an intelligent person as are you, if you were to come into my school tomorrow I've got a perfectly well written easy to understand marking policy, there we are, there's thirty books you crack on and mark them. Would you mark them as well as my staff who mark 120 a night? No you would not. Would I mark them as well as my staff, who mark 120 a night? No, I would not. Therefore, how can you expect me to fill in a form that you do 50 times a day, to do it as well as you do? It is never going to happen, because if I was doing your job as well as you do and my job as well as I do I would be working 180hrs a week, because I'd be doing everybody's job really well, all I can do is the best job I can do. I'm telling you now, if I'm filling in a MAR form I'm doing it because there's a really big problem with that family, otherwise, would I waste the time? No I wouldn't, I'd be giving out stickers, chatting to staff, teaching, which is what I've tried to do 3 times now and 3 times I've ended up having a big problem in school I've had to deal with and let down the staff member I was going to be teaching with, see what I mean, and I think this whole get your jargon in if you do a good job...[shrugs and gestures] because I did I bamboozled Ofsted, totally wiped the floor with them, not because I faked it out but because I was able to say, like you did, special measures... I don't think so... you're looking at data there aren't you, yeah, I understand that. Again, you inherit a school, which people say is a good school, I walked into my school, you all know where I work, and I got told year 2 data for the last 4 years has been in the top 3% for the whole of the country, pardon me? [looks surprised and shocked] the kids can't write their own names, what's going on here? What had gone on there was that people had happily signed off the data, the year 3 and 4 staff were literally ripping their hair out going off sick, _____ had been in, before I got there the old Head had showed him round this fabulous building and all the great... well done!!! And then I tip up, green as grass, to a massive deficit budget all the junior staff hating the year 2 teacher, the year 2 teacher lasted not even 2 terms, and why? Because I said oh you think you're that good? You can go into year 3 with them then, oh...oh..... She lasted 2 terms before she was gone. She'd faked it out, the old Head had signed it off, the old governors signed it off, and when Ofsted came in and

challenged me on all this, I had all the evidence to prove I tried to contact the LA and I'd said, I don't know which of you has been in to validate all of this but....no. I had other Headteachers, Ofsted inspectors, very well respected, of outstanding schools saying some of your kids have moved to our school and they've been here 2 years and they're still not as good as when they left you... I know! You've got 2 - I've got 26! Thank you very much! Look at my data for the next 4 years, watch me how I fail!

- F: *That's the same conversation I'm having with the LA I had on Tuesday, my outcomes will not be what they should be, because they've invented data from KS1 to KS2, so even above floor this time, by the grace of God alone, but my progress measures would have been so much better if the KS1 data would have been true.*
- C: *But I think that, that just comes back to the pressure that people were put on, and you can look back to it, because they were put on pressure in order to be able to show impact of initiatives in school, it's not based upon the kind of honesty of really having professionalism, because it's like...oh sugar!*
- A: *If that data was kept internal to schools, nobody would be bothered about faking it out, they'd say that's interesting C, I notice you've got a pocket of children like I have, GRT say, and you've shown me the progress of them, tell me what you've done there, instead it's plastered in the press and parents use it in a very negative way, the local paper, the [names a local paper], slams every school poor this, poor that, poor the other, and you think. I rang the [names a local paper] and said "sorry, you've given me the lowest score, have you ever been into my school, no, perhaps you should try? Oh it's all based on our grades on line?" I think in 2016 to be a Head, you face the press for a start off, who just damn you, you face the government who create policies that don't work. I'll give you an example, attendance policy. We are hammered every month by the EWO for poor attendance. The guy yesterday, HMI, said "well yes some schools say if I take out this group of children then this is good, and then they say we're and inclusive school". So I say I am an inclusive school and you're damning me because of a government policy on attendance, however, If I remove the children who are allowed also by government policy to travel, my attendance is really, really good, it's really high, I'm not being not inclusive, whatever the opposite of inclusivity is, I'm not?*
- C: *I felt exactly the same way, when you made that comment, you were actually saying to everybody in this room, you're not allowed to justify the things that you justify and only...you were*

saying that that's your pile...yeah, sort it. So it's a rewording of it, that you have to be able to say, we are this type of school, if I take them out its this, I'm just proving to you that these children are making great progress but, however, we recognise that we have high traveller, or high poor attendance, whatever, these are the things we've put in place and these are the improvement of it. I think what his argument was, that actually people are saying that and then saying so therefore... this is what it looks like so I can prove to you it's alright, this is what this cohort are and this is what we put in, in order to address it.

A: *I totally agree with you, but his inspectors came to my school and said we want to give you an outstanding but we can't, because your attendance is this, and I said "In which case you are only ever going to give this school a ceiling because this is an inclusive school, were not going to say listen guys we know you are from a particular cohort, so we're not going to have you because you're gonna damage us and you're not going to let us get outstanding", we're saying "look, everyone's welcome we treat everyone the same" and then Ofsted have said we are only ever going to be good because we can't improve attendance any further. Yet I employ somebody, and given what we said about budgets and funding, I employ someone to follow up on my attendance, her job is relentless, and the transience, kids coming in, kids leaving, CTFs, ringing up the other school that they're registered in, co-registration...*

B: *Isn't it a shame that that's how you think, because we're actually all in this job for the children?*

H: *But then, do you need a piece of paper that says outstanding?*

B: *Exactly. Isn't it a shame that we're thinking, I can never get to outstanding?*

C: *That's why they're trying to take the outstanding grading away aren't they? People just want to do it whereby you are good enough or not good enough, and I think that would make it much, much easier.*

D: *I think that would be a really massive step forward.*

B: *What I constantly say to my staff is, I am not doing anything for Ofsted. What we do, we do for the children, if we get that right we'll be fine for Ofsted, so my focus isn't Ofsted and my focus isn't data and performance tables. I never actually look at them I never look at the Chronicle and stuff like that, not interested, and as long as my children are fine and we're doing the best we can and my families are happy and they see their children are happy and they're making that progress, that's our focus.*

- C: *That was always the conversation I had with my staff when we went into category, 2 weeks in. I never, never talked to them about Ofsted, we never looked at the framework, we never talked about criteria, opening line to them was, you know where we were, the journey's the same, now Ofsted know about it. I've never, ever done things in school to tick boxes, we've done, what do children need to do today? What do we need to do for them today and how does that impact tomorrow? Whether that's attendance, feeding them, clothing them, working with parents, literacy, maths, whatever and if you get that as sort of your ethos, your remit then everything else follows, it just takes time and it's time that sometimes plays against you and it's definitely played against me when my Ofsted window opens if I have somebody who is still of the mindset, well data says no.*
- A: *But don't you think though, that that's because of the job you're in? Like, if you were a parent, and had no knowledge or experience of education, and your child's school was suddenly overnight, you're skipping along thinking it's a lovely school and my child's happy, they're making progress I'm really delighted and then...Oh! There it is! In the paper they've gone into a category...oh my god! I'm going to take my child out of that school and move them, and all of a sudden the impact on the school is dreadful, when actually some of the things can be changed overnight.*
- C: *Some of it is the performance in the room with the Ofsted inspector.*
- A: *Exactly, which brings us right the way back to, if you're good at giving a good story, and you've got it all on the top of your Head and your governors are good, which is another issue there...*
- C: *You've got to train them up to get in through the door just to sit in the same room as them haven't you, now you remember how you know this don't you. I had my governors looked at me like that...[stares openmouthed] I said, right ok let's just go through everything again that you have done, and I talked really, really slowly at them because they were absolutely panicking, (A: because they're not trained are they?) we spent an hour and half just going...I'm just reminding you, and it was like having kids in front of me and then said, right I'm just going to go through that again and I'm going to ask you the questions again and that's what we were working with before we went into an Ofsted. So I'm just like looking after people before we go into an Ofsted, you know, can't do anything to prepare me, because I'm just going round going, "and you remember this don't you"*

this is what we've done this is how you...these are all of those things...just to kind of appease them and get them ready to be able to perform.

- A: *How poor is that? What a waste!*
- B: *But when you think about it, the LA are accountable for the schools within their authority so they do target those schools that are in RI or a category or whatever, because that is what they're required to do and they don't want schools in those sorts of positions because it looks bad for the authority, so they're trying to cover their back by doing that.*
- C: *They turn around and say we've only got a few schools, and I'm thinking...that's one of mine I didn't think it was that bad.*
- B: *That's what they are required to do. They have higher people that they have to be accountable to. Ofsted come in and they are really there for the government aren't they? Because the government, it's all political. The government want to say "we've raised standards". None of that stuff is really about the children, they say it is, but it isn't and so you have to be mindful of what their remit is and play that game if you like, tick those boxes, but it's getting the balance between doing that as Head and not passing on all that fear to staff, and all that pressure and worry, which is why the data, you know, that the Head felt that pressure put it on to the teachers, the teachers felt that pressure and that's how you get in those situations, it's not about the children.*
- C: *Because when you were saying about the children, I'm ok as long as my children are happy, and my parents are happy and to me it's the staff. You cannot be an outstanding school if your staff have not got a family life, you haven't got outstanding, I'm sorry, as far as I'm concerned. It's that balance between, I measure some of my success on my teachers will go and spend time with their families, and leave early, this is the night I do this, or do this and I can actually see them trotting around with a smile on their face, doing all those things they need to do to be resilient and for them to have their own Teflon to put on, and that's what I want because otherwise what they do is if you say one little thing they can be off like a bottle of pop, and you're going - where the hell did that come from?*
- A: *If you had to say one thing, the trickiest thing that you've had to deal with in the last 3 years, what would you say? G one?*
- G: *External pressures, because I wasn't in control.*
- A: *Things beyond your control that happen?*

G: *Things that are beyond the umbrella of the education remit.*

A: C?

C: *For me it was the union action, and continues to be the union action, and really it isn't the union action because it is a couple of people who I know now why they do it, is unconscious bias. I went on an absolutely brilliant conference, but they see me as SLT. What I can never understand was, it's not SLT against you. This group of people are here for you and because of the damage that had happened to them previously they still revert to type, so as soon as something happens that they want to question, they then go to the union, and I'm like...woah!!! You're my staff! Come to me first (A:it's like a default setting) trying to change people's views and opinions is the hardest thing because I go in my Head, look I'm this person if you come to me, I will do anything on earth I can do to make your life easier (A: so it's staffing really?). It's changing their view point in order for them to be able to...and when you've got somebody in there whose going...well you know...you've got everybody happy and this person goes around going blah blah blah and you're thinking just come and ask! Just come and ask! Have a discussion! Suddenly I've got ____ from the union talking to me about my staff! So I spend hours explaining things to people who...I mean one of the blokes who was representing them rocked up as if he'd just come back from Glastenbury, absolutely clueless saying "well when I was teaching this happened and you shouldn't be asking people to do roles for the money, if they want to do...if their quite interested in history then they could do something for that" I thought it was so clear, for upper pay scale do this, this and this, no, apparently not. You shouldn't be asking them to do anything for upper pay scale, and that is what [names an LA representative] says? So I don't get that? I thought it was very clear? I thought that people were taking things on board for the professionalism and that's what I don't understand when people kind of haven't opted into that after 3 years? They know me, they know me, and part way through last year we had a load of staff unhappy it allowed me to be able to go in and say this is why this is, this is why this is, and I had to clarify myself and say so tell me how I'm going to know what's going on in your classroom if you're not going to let me in through the door again when I thought it was sorted.*

A: *So this is re-establishing your culture? That's the bottom line of it isn't it, if they bought into your culture, that you want to have in your school, of support and nurture (C: and openness and professionalism) they wouldn't be doing what they're doing, they'd be working with you and asking you rather than going*

externally.

C: *But what the external people have done, they've confirmed that, they say "oh, yeah you passed your NQT here, you passed it, therefore, you should be left alone" and I'm like that's not professionalism that's not engaging a learning culture, that person will turn around and say but I got outstanding, no, outstanding is good teaching every day, that will triangulate to be outstanding to me, day in, day out! Slog it out? Not interested. Don't want to even see you anymore on observations, no doing that, we'll do learning... This is how we'll do our professional development, you will engage in it and you will address your teaching. So I changed that completely, but there's still that kind of mentality of, well you observed me once, I put a really exciting thing on, you thought I was really good. But then the following week you didn't have progress within your session when I was wondering through and I could see a raft of worksheets that were absolutely useless to the kids and you were sat on your computer doing your bloody email!*

D: *Do they not realise it will have an impact on further judgements later on?*

A: *That is massive, because that is all about culture, which is massive.*

C: *But I have got other people who...you know... you're buoyed up again aren't you...you're going oh, you're chomping at the bit you're doing that and I've been wanting them to video themselves. I've been dripping it and a big push this year, people who would have gone [gasps] now taking hold of that and sharing with people, and that's when you can go...well actually I think they are moving this culture forward.*

A: *It's working but it's just taking time.*

C: *It does take time.*

D: *I would echo that. I think with culture. It's probably the most difficult thing that I've had to do, the established view point of the good schools, fantastic all works well, but you go in there and actually there are divisions within that staffing group, they're working in clicks, there's not a culture of support, there's not a culture of openness and I'd echo what you were saying that's something you have to work really, really hard at, saying well this is how I'd like us to work and it's not something that will happen overnight.*

C: *And you can't just say it once can you? You think, I'm saying*

this again! But it's like dog with a bone stuff isn't it, I'm saying it again but I'm not going to stop saying it, because this is really important.

D: *And it is it's about that being open with each other establishing that from day one and saying well how can we support each other with that peer mentoring support.*

A: *Because maybe the old way was about the Head being autonomous and what you're asking for is to be more collaborative approach, which is obviously a more modern approach because it's what everyone is looking for - distributed leadership high on the agenda, collaboration.*

D: *I don't work from the top down, if we've got something...I'd like us to get to here, how can we do this because you get more buy in from staff.*

G: *My staff has really bought into it.*

D: *And my staff have really bought into that. It's a different way to what the previous Headteacher did and it's not to say necessary it's a wrong way to do it. I wouldn't sit here and say it's a bad way of doing things, it's a different way that I'd do it, it's how I wanted to set up the culture.*

A: *And you're the new Head. It's like you said before F, the person who is in charge of the ethos and the culture of that school is always the Head so if the Head comes in and they want to be autonomous then they're autonomous. If they want to come in a be collaborative then they're struggling to get that collaboration running because collaboration requires and openness and a trust element, if you're used to autonomy you don't trust anyone so it's a time thing isn't it?*

D: *It's been brilliant because people now come into my office and say I've got this issue, but I've got this way to do it or this way to do it and actually we've got this way as well, so it's solution based. It's like what should we do? Well, what do you think is the best way to do it? I think this will do this, this will do this but I think I'm leaning towards this one. Well then, let's run with this and see how it works. I've got your backing, and that's it, establishing that culture where hopefully is tangible when you walk into the school.*

C: *But I think that our reflective nature comes from how Headspace was set up. We had sessions on leadership, we had sessions on those reflections so where we are now? 3 years down the road? I still reflect back on the sessions that we had. I can still remember a lot of those discussions that we had*

and you know sort of like me say a comment, I remember being challenged on it saying well I'm paid to work all of the hours but not all my staff are. It was like, no, you're not paid to work long hours, you are paid to make really good decisions whilst you're there and paid to help people and I was like...oh god [sighed loudly] so you go away and you do protect your hours and do all of those things. I can reflect back to it but I think as far as leadership is concerned that's exactly the same is that we had that opportunity to stop and think and reflect upon that because that is so important, and I think our desire as well to continue that kind of focus of having a focus for Headspace, having a structure to it, having that level of discussion and dialogue and something new coming into it, the different things that people did as far as that's concerned was really important and gave us new routes to go on as well.

A: *H?*

H: *Staff capability.*

A: *Staff capability and expectation. It's so damaging isn't it?*

H: *And it's so destructive to the person going through it. The knock on effect to the rest of the staff, and also you know personally because you are putting somebody through absolute hell and it's questioning your own judgement and at the end of the day you know it's the right thing to do, and that's when you find out it is a very isolated position because there's nobody within the school that you can talk to and be supported about it.*

G: *I think in that you're absolutely right H but I think for me, because I had to do that sort of thing myself, there was a shift for me where I bought into the fact that decisions that I made were because I was the Headteacher that was totally separate from the bit that was G and I am far stronger at that now, far better, but I think that's part of the process when you take colleagues through capability. I remember having a conversation with my deputy what she wanted was...just let me have...just let me teach them and it goes against everything we believe and are passionate about in terms of providing quality to children on a daily basis but they have to be with what you deem to be inadequate in order to have that evidence base and that I still now struggle with.*

C: *I think it's hard to when you're a small school your saying you're on your own with it. I didn't, I was going down this route, my deputy knows everything. I do have that ability to have somebody else there. I think if I hadn't, and I hadn't got a strong leadership team and I hadn't got all the people to send out to support me, I think that would have been absolutely horrendous*

because I couldn't have been able to say...I'll just have this much..this much..this much and everybody was completely honest and open in coming back and giving me the information. I think it's really hard when you've got a small school, you've got fewer people to be able to do that, and I remember you coming to Headspace looking absolutely bloody awful, you know? And it was like sugar...ok and that must have been absolutely horrendous. I know that coming back into the group with Headspace and being able to say...this is the position that I'm in, you know? It's really good to be able to do that when I was trying to get rid of mine because it was awful and they just don't get it! I'm about to set off again with a teaching assistant if she doesn't get a post, and I don't wanna do it because I know what the journey is, but I know that it is possible to work and it will be ok and I can support my staff in understanding it's ok, we'll try and support, we'll try and do all that but there has got to be a point where they have to step up and do it because the rest of the team's being affected.

A: *What about you D?*

D: *Something that sort of revealing itself at the moment is the difference in people: what they present and what the reality is what their belief is about the culture in school. People have gone along with it to get us to the place where we're at and most people are well on board and there's two members of staff who have presented this front of being on board, but it's been stripped away now we're on our own and sort of doing well. You can clearly see the difference between the gang that are really for it and the people who looked like...everybody looked like they were for it and these 2 have now revealed themselves...I just think it's hard to identify the difference between what people are showing you and their reality and the impact it has...when you were talking about culture it's the impact it has on that culture. There's a couple of little niggles and a couple of little cracks that I'm just...I don't know how to sort it out yet and I don't know what the real issue is so I'm just working my way through that to try and find out, but people mask stuff and that's the main problem.*

A: *Do you think it's masking or do you think it's because you were RI and you had to pull together and now you're not, there's no need for that gelling together and people can actually be themselves a bit more now, or do you think they have literally just hidden it?*

D: *We've got about 60% new staff and I think they are aligned to the old staff still, they are old staff and there's not a distinction between them, but there are 4 members of teaching staff that are still old guard, were there before I arrived, 2 of them have*

really bought into it and there was a massive difference between the other 2 who I think are clinging onto the past and don't believe there's a problem and to come through it and say I don't see the difference and I think they're coming to the end of their time at school and you just think...Jesus it's going to be everybody that's gone and you hear of Heads who have wiped clean of staff, that's not what I set out to do at all, but I think some people are so entrenched in what went on before that they find it difficult.

- C: *They put it back don't they? They sort of keep saying...that this was what it was like, you're kind of going – seriously?*
- A: *I know but even in historical context before, even from 2014 the landscape was different so they can't say there's no difference because whether it was you or the same Head that they had before the landscape would have shifted.*
- E: *We took on schools when there was a big shift in Ofsted.*
- A: *And a big shift in the curriculum as well [all agree] and so they blame you because you're the person saying this is what we need to do, when really the blame should be...well it shouldn't be blame anyway, because if you are in education for 20 odd years, which we all have, you understand that things are going to change, because government change policy and we all have to roll with it.*
- D: *I think you've hit the nail on the Head, because when we came into Headship there was a period of absolute total change in performance management, SEND, the new curriculum and we've had to literally immerse ourselves into that as well as becoming a Headteacher so it's been a massively upward learning curve for everybody!*
- A: *And most people don't like change anyway do they? So if you're the person that has to take hold and do that change you are going to be the negative point for that feedback.*
- D: *We've shifted the culture of the school and we've done that quite successfully it's the culture that people believe in themselves that's the hard bit and what you can't necessary shift.*
- C: *And that's your unconscious bias.*
- D: *Yeah, yeah and it's only now that you realise there's a choice isn't there?*
- A: *What about you B?*

- B: *I'm the same as H really, just going through this capability procedure and I think I've got a little bit Teflon actually over the summer because this has been going on since February and it's just going on. I think what I'm finding more frustrating... I think I've got through the fact of...am I a horrible person? Well, some people think I am, but hey that's the way it is and I've got to the point where I think I've got paid to do a job and I have to do this and I know it's the right thing to do you just have to get on with it. But what I'm finding really difficult and it's back to policy, the policies and procedures that are in place i.e. can't use to my advantage because of the national issues that are around specifically mental health at the moment which is huge, and so although you put everything in place and you do your very best and so on and so forth and you follow all procedures and all the policies you have absolutely no sort of control over this at all. They hold all the cards every single time.*
- A: *I think the deck is stacked against you rather than...*
- C: *I must admit though, when I got rid of mine [B: when they chose to move on] when I paid her £7000 to move on, and that is galling but you know your protecting the children, and you know that is the procedure you're going through negotiating on that, I did feel I was supported by HR and she was very, very clear, because it was breakdown with the staff and relationships with the staff that worked really, really well in my favour, because she was quite obviously not able to fit into the team and quite obviously not be able to do that and it was irreparable. So it's at a point where the relationship is irreparable [A: so it's like a divorce] it's completely like a divorce because it's never going to work out and therefore lets come to an agreement that allows you to go to your new life and that's what's kind of necessary isn't it, and I'm passionate about protecting this persons mental health and I can see it's making them poorly because they're finding it really difficult to do the job and therefore I'm really concerned, you know? And I think if you're pushing that kind of front, which I was really worried about the person, and I'd do anything to help them but they kept shooting themselves in the foot*
- B: *When this person refuses to speak to you [A: which they're allowed to do] they're not really allowed to do, but they won't pick up registered letters and their laptop is broken so they can't email you, it's that frustration and I have to sit it out and that's just the way it is but it's that frustration of not being able to use those procedures that little bit of leeway you have got to move things on because they're not doing themselves any favours...it just makes things more difficult for them to come back and pick up and get on with whatever they want to do. It*

makes it more stressful for them, but with only having 3 classes in my school, it's a 3rd of my school, I've sorted the 2 classes out...fabulous...and I can't move...it's that frustration that I can't move the school on for those children for that class which consists of years 4 5 and 6, so that's the main frustration .

C: *Its key isn't it? It's what everyone turns up at school to do and you've not got the person in front of the class that you want.*

H: *Think we'll need to wrap us soon.*

A: *We will, who's next?*

F: *Parents, that's all I need to say.*

E: *Ditto.*

A: *I was going to say mine fell into 1 of 4 categories and I couldn't pick between. Parents is one, and the viciousness and the personal attacks, we all accept it isn't personal but when you're being viciously attacked verbally by email or physically...*

F: *They just don't see what you do, do they? And some of them, you know, God bless them they're struggling at home and they're projecting, and you know that they're projecting.*

A: *But it doesn't make any difference, it's still against you.*

E: *I don't think they'll ever see the good that you do and we're inherently like that as a race aren't we? You'll see a whole load of calculations on the page and you get one wrong, what do you focus on, got that bloody one wrong and that's it in a nutshell! They will never see all the good that you do it'll just be the focus on that one thing.*

F: *And you know the one that has been the bane of the whole school's life for so long? Her son's in year 6 this year, recommended going to a special school (G: oh yeah I remember this!) because he's a child genius. Well he is, she's already phoned Oxbridge and asked what their deal is on autistic children, what's their intake, anyway, but she's having a survivors party this year. You can be an honorary member because we've survived. I'm like, why are you being nice? (C: I nearly didn't survive, cos of you!!!) Parents - its hard isn't it?*

A: *So, parents was on my list.*

E: *Yep, parents was on my list.*

A: *And also high on my list was safeguarding/SEN/when they're*

both combined that's been really like horrible, and governors.

E: *Yeah! And they were my 3!*

A: *And the final one is the budget!*

Session 2: If you didn't have Headspace, what would your support network look like?

02/12/2016

Duration 45:04

Discussion topic: If there was no such thing as Headspace, what do you think your support network might look like?

F: *I think the most important thing for this is that there is a purpose behind Headspace and that is that it's about our wellbeing, and that is the prime thing about Headspace, it's time away from school and it's about us as people not just as Headteachers and when you look at all the other support networks that you might have, there isn't any of them that will fill that remit, I meet with [names a cluster of schools] Heads and we go out for lunch every month once a term if we manage to get a day where we can all make it and I suppose that is about our wellbeing, but it isn't structured in the same way, as Headspace. Headspace makes you think about, yes we can't wait to get together and have that moan, that get it off our chest, out of our Head, but we all bring the positive as well, it makes you stop and think about the negative, the difficult bits of your job and helps you put them into perspective, but it also makes you properly think about a positive on what you've got to be grateful for and I think the fact that it's so regular and the fact that we're all so committed to it means that it's a massively important part.*

G: *For me it's importantly collaborative and I think if I didn't have Headspace I don't think I would be as strong or as confident a leader that I've evolved into, because this is about our wellbeing but a wider network of colleague Headteachers that brings a wealth of experience across a range of different types of schools, whereas when you're in your own EIP or partnership your very focused and driven about what is pertinent to that mini community and I think it's very easy to become pigeon holed to that way of thinking, whereas I think the collaborative ... if I reflect on what I'm part of, there is the diocese and partnership there is the [names an LA], partnerships the local partnership in terms of the 13 schools where I work and then there's this, and this one brings the most value because this is a form of wellbeing but it's also born of trust, whereas in a partnership there can be competition and there can be a feeling that you have got to ..., I don't ever feel here that I have to sell myself or be anything other than me as a leader who has good days and bad days and problems and successes etc. That collaborative promotes for me quality leadership because it*

reflects on the good times the bad times and you share experiences in a place of trust and safety.

C: *We're all at the same stage of our journey, we're all coming up to 4 years in so we're having those kind of thoughts at the same time potentially, I know we're all experiencing different stuff and I think that's the key aspects of it, I know the other groups that have joined have got people who are very experienced in all of those types of things so it's not that same journey so we've not got somebody; unless you're close to people who are qualified at the same time and lucky to still be in contact with them, I think that that's very different.*

A: *I was just going to say before it goes out of my mind, I would agree with you there, because I was thinking apart from this what other support networks to I have, I was lucky when I came to Cheshire, because I moved authorities, I had [names a Headteacher] who I knew as a deputy in my previous authority, she was a Head, so she immediately took me under her wing and she'd already established a group of Headteacher friends because her sister was a Head at [names a school] so I had that established network and I went for curries with them every so often but they were very experienced Heads so when you've brought a problem, like the one I shared earlier, I brought that problem to them, their immediate response was you to email [names an LA representative], which I did, which got me into hot water and I think if I'd brought it here first maybe we'd have all been a bit floundery because we were all at that very green stage; what do you do, but because they were all experienced the advice that they shared was completely different to me, they were really robust to cope [B: with the fallout] and I'm not entirely sure that I was, I was lucky at that time to have a governor who supported me very closely because she'd worked with me before and she was a friend of mine, but I don't think that I had developed that and like I said earlier, my conversations are now I'm not as naive as I was 4 years ago I now know that this is wrong, but it takes a while, maybe to learn by experience. [C: course it does] So I think what you said there about we've all started at the same point, so we've all had ups and downs, bits where we've had our fingers burnt, bits where we've thought I did that well and I'm actually coping with the job, whereas, if you're always hanging out with very experienced people you can feel a little inadequate.*

G: *You feel that there's a judgement there don't you.*

- C: *So that's the structure that we started with isn't it. Now again we probably wouldn't have come up with that structure...*
- A: *...that was J who imposed that structure on us, that was the whole point the first year was very, very structured wasn't it, so we couldn't have come in and spent 2 hours just going blah blah, because we'd start that and she'd go ah annndddd let's focus in on this, she'd focus us in on lots of different leadership things and we've kind of adopted the structure, but I think we've adopted the mental health bit where we feel that it's important to share, she would let us do a little bit of that and get us right back onto the focus. Do you remember those early days? Because I remember being relieved that she let us have a little; and I used to feel quite guilty then, [D: feel frustrated] I had so many problems I felt guilty going and this and this and you could almost see her going and anyway let's get onto this thing.*
- F: *A lot of her tasks, her leadership tasks were kind of to meet those elements of the job weren't they?*
- B: *But I think that's what is particularly valuable about meeting here, it's like a professional meeting with friends, there's no agenda, every partnership I go to or meeting or cluster whatever there's an agenda and here there isn't necessarily an agenda, there's things we like to share like the whiskers and things like that, so there are professional things that we do share and help each other, but you know if you go off agenda because somebody's upset over something then that's what we have to deal with and it's very personal, it's that professionalism amongst friends which I don't feel; I've got other Head friends but it's here that I know I can go, oh god I can't do this, and no judgement.*
- A: *And the group is small enough that you're not exposed, because there's only ever a handful, which it kind of makes me think; we didn't start off this size, we started off twice this size, so we know that people drop off over time, but my thinking now is I wonder what support they actually have? They didn't stick with the program for the first year, for their own reasons, I wonder now what they have to fall back on? I wonder what their landscape of support looks like, because ours is this plus our other groups.*
- C: *I wonder what D's got to say about it, because obviously there was a period of time where you thought, I've got too much other*

stuff, it wasn't for you prioritised so.

D: *If Headspace didn't exist you would find those other groups that you think will do the same thing as it, so you'll be choosing people, but the choices that you've got are probably going to be links that you've already got and in some way you're accountable to each other. So the people that you end up getting involved with you end up doing joint projects with or collaboratively with in some way and then all of a sudden you've got a different relationship with them [A: because there's an agenda] yes, and then you can't go on about these things because if you show a level of underperformance a judgements made about you were actually here there isn't [A: or weakness or vulnerability] yeah, we can all judge each other but it has no bearing on my work or any of us, there's no accountability alongside that [H: it's a safety isn't it) and I don't know if any of you do joint things together apart from this, do you do anything?*

A: *All I did was help you with that thing, but that wasn't like a joint project that was offering help and like when I said about the pupil premium thing, it's just happy to help, if I find something out I don't keep it to myself and think "I've done it ha ha".*

D: *That's what I was missing, that's why I wanted to come back to it, because there was that gap although I had those other groups they didn't quite fit that opportunity to just go...*

C: *We're starting to grow that in the [names a group of schools] cluster to a certain extent, they've built it up into something that people can relate, now let's get that sharing, let's get that, that's the next step for us isn't it.*

D: *That won't be wellbeing though, there's too much competition and too much suspicion in there's local authority favoured people in the group, there's other people that are right on the...there's not that whole common understanding.*

A: *So there's the ins and the outs, I think our whole authority's like that, I think either your face fits or it doesn't, for whatever reason you're either in or you're out.*

D: *And this is like the misfit group...*

- H: *I try and keep under their eyes, so that nobody notices me, nobody in the diocese knows anything about me, nobody in the authority knows anything about me.*
- C: *I must admit talking about trust and that, I'd rather go It's me I'm an open book.*
- F: *Other networks, other collaboration is about improving outcomes for your children in your school and improving outcomes for you school, and this is about improving outcomes for ourselves so that we can do the job.*
- H: *I had my appraisal meeting on Wednesday as part of school improvement, you have to put down what other things you've done, and then at the bottom it's the governors have a thing to say, the governors give permission, so working from home if I need to, and I put on there attending the Headspace group and attending [names a group of schools] cluster which is our schools, and the chair of governors said to me, "I don't know what is this Headspace and why is it different from the [names a group of schools]?" and I said the [names a group of schools] I go to because I'm the Head of [names the school] and through all the things that we've said; I am the chair of the group, but I never contribute because I know that there are other persons within that group who are waiting for me to say something that they can then latch onto and take away from that meeting, "so do you know what's going on...d'you know...d'you know" so I never partake in those things (because you're protecting yourself) I'm protecting myself and to some extent my school as well, but I said when I go there I'm the Head of [names the school] and I'm representing my school, but when I go to the Headspace I'm me, and I never share it with anybody else, but I can share my fears because we've all had similar and over the 4 years it's really confirmed for me that actually I can do this job, I can be a Headteacher, I have my good days my bad days, doubts like everybody else, but being with you, listening to the things we've all faced, I think actually I'm not alone, I'm not the only one who has all this self-doubt and everything and that's what makes us better, it's the only place and if I didn't have this I would have nowhere. I wouldn't have anywhere.*
- F: *You wouldn't have anywhere where you're H, you'd be a Headteacher wherever you go and we need this I think. I need to be F the 'Crank', is this a Crank idea or look what I did that was fantastic you know, look what I was greeted with on*

Monday, we're all on the same...it's massively different.

B: *When we share those celebrations and the things that go well, then everybody celebrates with you, it's not 'who does she think she is' you know.*

A: *So the question is what other forum would you go to, [there isn't one everyone says] there isn't one is there, and what I've heard, and correct me if I'm wrong, this is the sense I get from the conversation, outside of here what we're faced with is isolation and threat and being alone (and guilt, and judgement) (D: that's from different levels though, for each person different person)*

C: *I think what people have done in their schools is build up a network to ensure a good leadership team, a governing body or that your governing body if you see the leadership team aren't work...you know people are very talented within here and have built up schools whereby, you've got your strong staff, you've got people who can you know... you've got those relationships you've built all of those things up, you're not necessarily going out to them all the time going...well I feel like this...because that's not going to do them any good is it, so you have got that support in school, [H: you've got to be seen] saying that you're completely isolated, I think that we've professionally built up relationships in order to be supportive, but you are the top dog, and people feel differently don't they I have found that my deputy... I felt that it was really important that your deputy is one of the staff because they're in contact with you they can give that honest... but I don't do the socialising with everybody, but that's because actually I had to get the job sensibly... my balance with my family and my balance with it ... so it didn't become my life like other schools I've joined whereby these are my friends, these are the people I'm going out with and all of those. I love them, I care for them, I want them to do really well, but it's not in the same kind of way it's a different kind of feeling and you have got that same kind of isolation from them and I think that, for me, it's right it works like that.*

G: *I think it's right what you say in the groups we bring those celebrations and this is the only forum where it's not ridiculed when we want to celebrate with one-another and we're happy, but it's the only place you can come and say "I called that one really wrong" or "I should have done that differently" and what we are as a group are solution focused, either in the support that we offer to get a colleague through that or just have you thought about...you might consider how you might tackle it this*

way...whereas in other collaborative there is a fear that you've actually been brow-beaten and you counter account for it when actually you know that there could have been something done differently because hindsight is perfect sight but here I don't feel like there would be any judgement whatsoever.

D: *I think as well the proof is in the trust has not been broken, I've never heard of the trust being broken in this group by anybody, whereas in other groups I've shared things in meetings that I thought were confidential and other people have told me about them later on that I haven't told them about, so you never know where the information is going, even though there is confidentiality at every meeting you go to there should be shouldn't there? and you just hear things...how do you know...why do you know about that...why would you be interested in it, whereas here I've not heard about anything that any of us have talked about coming at a different angle, you would hear about it because people would mention it wouldn't they out of interest really. The proof of the trust in this sort of group.*

G: *But that comes back to us valuing the core purpose, which is well being.*

A: *Do you think that's because J set us up? Do you remember at the start she set us up with a list of things, if you said to me now can you list...I couldn't list them, do you remember she wrote a list, basically like this is how it's going to work and I can't remember what it was now but, do you think somehow it's just there in our subconscious that we made that agreement [yes agreed by the group]and even though people have gone over time those of us that have stayed have kind of maintained it, we might not be able to name what those things are, there must have been at that time she was establishing that sense of integrity and trust between us all about respecting each other's views, I know that would be pretty bog-standard for a group like this and probably every Headspace.*

D: *That may be why they're not here though...because that's very value driven, so if there values didn't quite fit how they wanted the group to be then that's a reason to move on isn't it. Actually that's not what I wanted it to be so I'll move on; I don't need that support network in that style.*

A: *I thought I might try and chat to some of the people who have gone to ask them this question, who support you; you're not in*

Headspace which is fine, but who supports you? What does it look like? Who looks out for you? Because what I've heard again is this is mainly about this is people this is mental health, caring and nurturing each other as opposed to the professional elements, because you can pick up the phone and ask any consultant how you can improve you're teaching and learning, but you can't necessarily get that kind of nurture from anybody if you pick up the phone randomly.

G: *I think it's relevant though if you think about what would define yourself as a leader and what's your core purpose as a leader, I think we are all very similar in that respect, the conversations you've had today about your own child and your own school and I think the way that you interact with children and how your office is set up, and your office is set up is very similar to how mine is, it's that core purpose, I'm not actually here for anybody else except children and I don't actually strive to be this "leader" which is above and beyond, I don't want to be an executive principal, I just want to do the best I can and my core purpose is the kids in my care.*

A: *So do you think the reason is why we have all gelled together and stayed together is to do with our leadership style (yeah) so we're not kind of ego driven autonomous leaders we're...because when we all chat we are all quite collaborative, we seam, from what we say, to be supportive of our staff, we don't want to be either a leader that goes in and wipes the floor with people, where people feel afraid to take a risk or make a mistake, we all say the right things don't we and I don't think anybody would be saying it in this forum unless we really meant it, there's no agenda.*

F: *If that was the case we would say nothing rather than something.*

B: *I think we know each other well enough now to say "don't do it that way".*

A: *So maybe that's what defines us compared to those that have left, who knows.*

D: *I think you can predict, well not predict, I could hazard a guess, there's a couple of people who really stick in my mind and there's one Headteacher who's always really busy and couldn't*

make it here, a guy (F: is it ok to name them?) (A: yes because it's all anonymous anyway) was it [names a Headteacher] who was the Head who was linked up to...(F: the free school) yeah and her husband (is it [names a Headteacher] and not wanting to make any judgement about them any shape or form, but I was worried that [names a Headteacher] and his own thoughts about his own wellbeing he seemed to care more about getting the job done really focused driven, like all of us are, but driven in a different way to sort of spell his own wellbeing from that, and I wondered (he was very business focused wasn't he) and a different sort of person than perhaps choose this as an option, and [names a Headteacher] was very... I'm not criticizing people in any way, (C: they're just different) I wonder if some people just don't need it, perhaps they don't need that thought about their own wellbeing because I'm just getting on with life.

C: Maybe it's more about her husband, you know they're both Headteachers and maybe that that's therefore their type because they're both developing their own school.

A: I might go and ask them.

D: Their support network is probably between them.

F: I would imagine that their support network would be frowned upon to need a support network, it's just they're very business orientated.

C: Well he came in to do his pitch, you know as far as his academy conversion, yes that was interesting, because everybody just immediately went, eh no thanks.

A: But that's the difference in leadership isn't it, which is fine. It's about fit isn't it because I always say when people come for a job everyone's always equally qualified aren't they, [H: whether they 'fit'] it's whether they fit, and we all, as I say, we all appear to be collaborative, none ego driven, all for the children, but you get other people and it's not a judgement of them, it's just an observation that they're much more autonomous and much more business minded and for them it's a different drive, that's ok but it just means that maybe they looked at the group and thought, hmm this isn't the right fit for me, I don't need this.

- C: *I know somebody who doesn't work at my school anymore, "oh Headspace that's where you're going to just whinge a lot, it's ridiculous, you have to sit there and listen to other people, a complete and utter waste of time" and she's moved to a different school and they have a very different ethos at this other school, and we were just incompatible.*
- D: *Talk to the staff in their schools, if you could get to talk to their staff about the feeling in their schools, I'd imagine you'd get the same sort of, they're reasonable, they listen to us, I'd imagine you'd get that from all of us, but I wonder whether you get that from the other places.*
- H: *I do know going back to, obviously this is totally confidential and anonymous, I know [names a Headteacher] because he's come from the school, he's in my cluster group as well, when we were in the first year I was frightened to death of him because the things that he was going in and saying what he was doing to his staff to his school to his parents, I was thinking no way I would do that, as part of our cluster group, he very rarely comes to our cluster group either, all the year 1, 2 teachers get together 3 or 4 times and when my staff come back, the things that they tell me has happened, or has been happening in his school, I couldn't even contemplate, as a human being, doing that to another human being and I think it's personality, it's leadership style and it's drive, and his drive is very different from my drive and I think the drive of this group is for the care of the children and the care of everybody and his drive to me totally different.*
- D: *[A: I wonder why we are like that?] I think there's loads of schools like that, and you could be describing any, there's probably a school like that in all our areas, rather than it be a particularly individual.*
- H: *I think it comes down to that leadership style, that personality and the values, if we brought our values, aims and ethos for each of our schools, they wouldn't be worded the same (the core purpose would be the same).*
- A: *If you came to my school and I could guarantee this because I've tested it out and said to the staff, "what's the bottom line" they'd say "put children first" and it's dead simple, you don't have to over complicate anything, it's children first and when there's something tricky going on I always say, we're getting a*

little bit blah blah, what's going on for the kids? Even if we get a little bit lost, as you do, you know we've got this thing at the moment about mum wants this, wait a minute, the mum might want that, we object to that, that might be our first response, but really lets just ignore the mum for the minute, what about this, and they go yeah. Sometimes it sticks in your craw to put that aside and focus on the child because you know it's not ethical it's not right, it's not following the policy. Put the child first ignore the rest, hard isn't it. But I'm wondering if there's anything common in our lives that has made us like that, because we're all different personalities? Some of us are gobbier than others, I think I'm much gobbier than you two. Some of us are much more vocal in this group so you couldn't say, oh, you've all got the same personalities, because we don't. We haven't all got the same background, because we haven't, we can't even say we're all the same sex, so what is it?

D: *Values. I think it's because we are values driven, well most of us are anyway.*

B: *On the very first meetings we had, going back to poor [names a Headteacher] I was paired up with him to do an activity, I thought he's scary, anyway he's not, but we did this activity, it was a pile of little words on cards and it was nurturing words and business words and you had to rank them from top to bottom, which was the most important, it was nurturing and at the bottom was taking control, those sorts of things, and they had to have elements of all of those but where's your starting point, and his was completely the other way round to mine, so I think it is about personality, it must be, we'd all, I bet, have all the nurturing ones at the top, and he couldn't get his Head around that at all, and his was starting with all the business, take control, those sorts of things at the top and equally I couldn't work from his starting point either, but I bet we all had putting it together now, we'd all have those nurturing cards at the top.*

F: *You must be very confident in your area of ability to have that approach, especially your first year, are we lacking in confidence?*

D: *Arrogance?*

A: *I would say (I think it's emotional intelligence) I think so, in the summer I went to [names a university] to help out a colleague of mine there whose doing his study on leadership, emotional*

intelligence and how you can do it, it was quite interesting, I put a thing that measures your brainwaves on my Head and had to look at a screen, it took about half an hour, it was a constant video stream of different people, different ethnicities, different ages, different sexes, coming up saying the same thing, which was a gobldigook phrase it sounded polish but it wasn't, they had to say it using an expression, you had to click on a wheel how you think they said it, so with anger, with passion, with humour, with sorrow. I was fascinated by this because I thought wow some of them were really tricky because I'd think oh was that, excitement or anger? I don't know and because it's a gobldigook phrase you didn't have any attachment to, anyway I scored really high, mid to high 70's and I was like oh I feel really bad to get mid 70's that's really bad isn't it? I've lost a quarter, and he said actually of all the other leaders I've done you've scored way and above, most of them come in at 50 odd. Leaders. The best people for emotional intelligence that he's studies, and he's studied a few hundred, were middle leaders. [B: pressure] His start is I wonder what happens to people at our level when they start losing their ability to be emotionally intelligent, to see how people are, and I said to him I think it would be about time, sometimes you're like "yeah ok I'll do that" but you haven't looked them in the eye which is sometimes where you can read emotion even when the voice is flat, because sometimes i'm like "oh yeah, I'll get onto that for you" [tapping away] I'm doing three things, I wonder what you would find if you chatted to High School Heads and their middle leaders because I think High School middle leaders are probably the most stressed out bunch of all because High School Heads are a lot less stressed.

- F: But emotionally I would say High School middle leaders are more emotionally aware.
- A: Be interesting though wouldn't it because I think, because I now know I have a measure from him that my emotional intelligence is quite high, I suspect we are probably all the same.
- C: What we've all said is that it's about we feel everybody is a team and value in those middle leaders so therefore potentially you've got more emotional intelligence, because you know in that position you hated someone telling you what to do, you want to grow your leadership skills and that's what we're doing, growing leaders of the future, but to a certain extent as Heads you start to especially really tough circumstances you have to say sorry, this is how high you need to get. Especially in tough circumstances I went in and said, shit the teacher's crap, right

we're going to put this in and this in, we're going to put these structures in place, you can make your choices soon, but at the moment you've just got to learn to do it this way. (A: that's your leadership style though isn't it) but it's only in certain circumstances though isn't it, there are times where you have to get rid of somebody to shut that emotional intelligence down because somebody is coming in their screaming and shouting at you, they're upset they're distraught, and you're having to shut down your feelings, because you can't show that you're feeling emotional, you try to do, you do do, obviously because it's upsetting if someone is upset with you, but you have to get through it and it does get easier to do, to some extent maybe we are having to shut down those feelings so that we can give really tough messages, because I find it much easier now, even the parental complaint, she came in shouting and screaming, which was good because I needed her to show her true colours, but you know you just have to keep..."your lying, your lying, you didn't say that" "well you know we sat down and looked at the email together" talking like that "I'll read the email" and she shouted over the top (G: that's emotional intelligence) I wonder about those kind of brain things when you're managing something, I don't know?

B: *I think people who have that control at the top sometimes are a bit fearful, as much as if I'm not in control I don't know what's happening, you have to be stronger, what I've learnt over the years, is the way we collaborate with our staff rather than do it to them, you have to be more confident I think to be able to do that, because you haven't got absolute total control...*

G: *...but that's that leadership as opposed to management isn't it, because you manage a situation and I'm done...*

C: *...and if it doesn't work it's your fault because you told us to do that, we are teachers you are professionals I've given you this to help as a tool, you need to make it your own, you make it exciting, you make it engaging.*

B: *But if you haven't got that emotional intelligence you have to keep control of what's going on at the end of the day once that classroom door is closed and those teachers are in there you don't have control over that lesson, apart from...*

C: *It's continuing to spread the ethos and continuing that dog with a bone kind of stuff.*

B: *That's right it's about enabling your staff isn't it and growing them as you say.*

A: *I think one good way of doing that is articulating that emotional side, because I've done it here I know, I've said here the first time I dealt with a tricky member of staff, I felt ill I couldn't sleep, I was panicking I could feel myself sweating my heart was racing. The second time I did it I could feel the same thing and I had a self-talk and I said right you've been here before, you've felt this before, this is what's going to happen next you will do the meeting, you will calm down, you will start to shake, and then it will be ok. The third time I had the same talk it lasted a bit, when I say self-talk, I'm not talking to myself, it's in my Head. I'm thinking I'm shaking I don't want to do it it's going to be awful it's ruining my day, but then you do the talk and now with my senior leaders it's happened lots of times they're much better at it I'll say "you're probably going to feel anxious about doing this, this is how your body will react, you will take a deep breath, you will do it and then afterwards ..." they're like huh huh and they do it and then afterwards we'll talk about different strategies, inject a bit of humour try and be self-deprecating how to de-escalate like you would with a child and it's being emotionally intelligent I think that helps you to name all of your feelings and it sounds dead 'huggy tree', but you're naming everything that your feeling and it's ok to feel that way and I'll say to people and have a difficult chat with them, "now this is really difficult chat to have because as a person I really like you, let me talk about the professional, which is really hard, this is how it's going to be..." so you're owning up even before you start having a really hard chat with these people, so they know it's not about the personal. You're a lovely person, let's talk about this which is a bit of a problem isn't it professionally? And owning up to that I think is empowering because you're not hiding behind I'm the Head and I'm perfect and I'm going to do this right every time, you're actually saying this is hard for everybody.*

C: *What is important as well about the Headspace and when it was set up was when we came and we said urgh and I know I had all the problems with [names a staff member] the teaching assistant of the Head Teacher who you wouldn't like this one, she's still got her fob at home with the school picture on it, it was actually deactivated a long time ago, I would have deactivated it sooner had I had a proper policy in place, but what she actually did was, [D: data protection training yesterday!] what she said was, "no that's your job" and it was that accountability it was that tough love wasn't it, [all: Brenda]*

this is one of the rules is that it's not about going oh well it's everybody else's job, it's actually well that's your job what you're paid for, and there was two really strong messages, that was one of them and then the other one was I was talking about long hours, you know I'm paid to do that and she went, she challenged me on it, no, you're paid to do a really good job, actually then that guilt about... when you're there you should be doing a good job but actually to do that well enough you need to be having your own life, have a family and do all of those things and it's then trying to pass that onto my staff and saying you know I've done it, I've been there, I've done too long and I really don't want my staff to do that, we're not good if that's what you're doing, so how are we going to stop it, it's just giving people more time to get the job done, if you're struggling with your marking, fine, let's have your class go and get it done but you need to know about it, it's braking down those barriers.

G: *That again is about leadership because you have got staff, I know I have got staff, I had a member of staff not too long ago walk and say G I'm struggling, I'm going to go under help me. And I felt confident to be able to do that.*

A: *That's what H said before wasn't it, when you said you worked in a school where you didn't want a say because you knew the reactions, your staff and your staff don't feel that way.*

G: *I felt really pleased that you've been to tell me, now I can help you to sort it out, what you need, she said I need an afternoon. That's all it takes.*

B: *I've had the same conversation with a member of staff this week.*

A: *Did anybody read the government position, this is aside from or conversation about Headspace but kind of what we're talking about, anybody read the government reports on teacher workload? I will forward the links. It's actually a very short report on marking, workload and another one, very, very interesting because I've just told my governors I'm going to be reviewing teacher workload.*

H: *I moved my year 1, year 2 teacher into year 3, 4 last September she was fantastic in year 1, 2 not a young teacher but she's still young in her career and I said to her there is nowhere for you to*

progress here and if I don't give you opportunity by going into another key stage I'm hindering you, I know you don't want to do it, I know you're a bit scared about it but I'm going to move you into 3 and 4, so she went in and I found out from my caretaker, by about half term she came to me and said just wanted to let you know that [names a member of staff] still here at half past 7 and she arrives at quarter past 7 in the morning and she's still here at half past 7 at night, but I don't want to get her into trouble, and I said I'll go and have a chat, so I sort of brought it up in a staff meeting, "I'm worried about our electric bill", joking you know "can't understand why our electric bill has suddenly gone up, it's not as if you're leaving your computers on when you go home or your lights on" and she came to me and she said, "I think it might be me" [All: laughing] I said "oh why's that [names a staff member] and she said "oh well, you know I'm here till half past 7" and I said "well I'm really shocked about that, why are you still feeling that you need to be here at half past 7 at night, what am I doing wrong that you feel you've got to stay till half past 7 in order to do?" So we had this real chat, she felt like she had to mark every single piece of work in depth and she had to do that, the change from 1 key stage to another is difficult, "well it stops now [names a staff member] I said "you're not going to the gym, you've always gone to the gym", she was saying I don't go to this class and I said "well that stops right now you go back and you do all of these things because it's for your own good", "we need to sit down and have a look how we can reduce and manage it" and so then after that she comes in sometimes at quarter past 4 and says I'm going to the gym now and that's fantastic, but it's that (A: wellbeing).

- C: *But how do you deal with somebody that won't do it, so I've had conversations, you've got to reduce your marking, you've got to do whatever, you shouldn't be taking home 3 sets a night, you can't. (All: some people are like that, it's their choice!) that's what I'm thinking, am I staff aware because I'm saying oops, it's a terrible job, no it's not, and she said well you work long hours, no I don't, I work hard and I think I've made mistakes, I said at the beginning this is going to be a tough journey, we are going to have to work our socks off, and whether she thinks I have to work hours and hours and hours, no. I know I've spent whole weekends working; I don't want somebody in that zone. They'll be fine at school, they'll be absolutely brilliant and then the minute they walk out that door there was nothing else.*

Session 3: Has Headspace ever saved your job and or your sanity?

27/01/2017

Duration: 23:47

- A: *We've had a big discussion this morning about conscious and unconscious bias and we've talked about coasting school agenda the abomination which is school governance, being in the bottom for the league tables and publishing in the newspapers, so we've had a massive discussion today already but the questions that we've just chatted about the focus of our conversation just specifically about Headspace, over to you, has Headspace ever saved your job or your sanity?*
- G: *Sanity yes! Job yes!*
- C: *Sanity yes, it reminds me to reflect upon things that I know about keeping mentally healthy and it puts things into perspective and one of the positive things as well that I care about within the group and being able to help people to remember those things to and I think therefore the session helps other people in that respect, and when you're helping people it helps you it's that positive feeling that you get from that too.*
- A: *You said before C about how you'd suffered depression in the past and when we did the sessions with J it really helped you to build resilience and overcome that depression do you think that's still the case?*
- C: *I think what it allows me to do is just to continue to remember the things that we do in order to be able to keep ourselves healthy. So even before joining Headspace I had overcome depression and I'm an avid reader about it. So if something's going wrong I'll read - Gibbons has really helped with that and the Cope really helped with that so those things I do value and those are the things I can go back to as we come and meet each time you sort of thinking, that's where it links back I can see somebody maybe not spending enough time with their family and it reminds you all the time that it is so important to do it. So when you're feeling guilty at work because you've left early, I don't now. I don't do that because of that continued resilience against, when someone kind of looks at you 'oh you're going home' or someone says "oh I thought you'd be the last to leave because you're the Headteacher" I think no, no, it's*

precisely because I'm the Headteacher that I'm leaving first to show other people that they must also do that, they must have that correct model for their own lives and we're constantly challenged weren't we, in those initial days it's set up with us that that is what you must do. Now I remember challenged on me thinking, well it's all right I'm the Head, I should be working those hours, I'm paid to work those hours and I was challenged on that and I was told very, very clearly I was not paid to do those hours, I was paid to do a good job as a Headteacher and that doesn't mean working long hours. And it helped me to go "I'm in the right, I'm in control, I'm the person that can do that". I'm in control of my mental health, no-one else is, I can't blame anyone else for that, if I do blame other people I'm being part of that aren't I? I'm perpetuating that problem instead of solving it, putting things in place and saying well no it shouldn't be like that, change it, let's challenge it, I think that's what it does and it continues to give you the strength to challenge it. Then I hear other people saying things, then I go "you know what, you are continuing to perpetuate the myth that a Head teacher should be on their knees and continue" no, therefore what are you going to do as a Head to control that situation and stop it, it's the power and reflection behind it, and that keeps me mentally healthy and stops me from making those kind of mistakes. I will spend time with my children, I will have my weekend, I work very, very hard, don't get me wrong, and sometimes I work very, very long hours, but that's my choice, not because I think I have to do, because I love it and I want to do it, that's very different than thinking you've got to do it.

F: *I've got a distinct memory of coming to a session in the second year, I can't even remember what it was about now, but it was my last Headspace and I'd decided I was looking for deputy jobs and I was completely, thought I was a better deputy than I was Head, I didn't feel I was strong enough, I think I had an issue with a parent and it had escalated and I just thought it's not for me, I'll be a deputy I'll work alongside and I was looking at Cherry Grove and it was the right school for me, he's the right Head Teacher for me to go and work alongside and I came to Headspace and was really down and within an hour I was like, I love this job and I'm not going and I'm not deputy material, I am good enough and it was that resilience.*

A: *So that saved your job and your sanity?*

F: *Yeah, and it was, you know, everyone else has the same doubts and for me that's what Headspace has done, it's made me far more resilient but when I question whether I'm good*

enough I now sit and I look at the evidence and I look at... I'm going to a tribunal, I've never done that before, I've been threatened with a solicitors letter if I dis-apply a little boy from SATS because his mum says he's got a right to take them, but I'm not panicking, I'm not going in on myself 'oh my god I wish someone else was making this decision and not me', I'm like embracing it and thinking I will make the right decision at the right time, now is not the right time we keep plodding along with him, I've consulted with the parent, I'll keep gathering my evidence and I'll make my decision when I'm good and ready, with the backing of the governors and the backing of the professionals who I've had to work with him, but I can clearly remember that day, walking in and I said "this isn't for me, I've got to go" and within an hour...

E: *I think you're absolutely right, because for me the two main things has taught me how to reflect better on what I'm doing well, on what I need to make better as well, but the resilience, I went through a similar situation where it was parents on my back about a decision that I'd had to make in the best interest of everybody in the school, and it was just not right for their child, it became quite nasty, parents coming in and shouting at me saying I'd ruined the life of their children, official complaints going in, going through the governing body, but actually Headspace for me is that comfort blanket that you just go and talk it through, 'what did you do? How did you do it' and it just made me reflect on that, and you know what I couldn't have done anything better with that but change a couple of things the next time, but actually you're making the decisions for those children in your school and it's them first and because some parent is berating you, that doesn't really matter so it's given me a little more resilience, that Teflon, I've actually sent that out to a few of the teachers, it's Teflon.*

C: *Yeah, it's not personal and they love that, but yeah it is that bit of a comfort blanket.*

F: *Headspace is not about fixing your problem, Headspace didn't make my problem go away and I'm not now of a mindset, in my previous Headship I wanted someone to come along and save me, I was waiting was it [mentions a senior member of the LA], was it [mentions a senior member of the LA], I was waiting for somebody to come and make it and smooth that path and make things better, and that's not what Headspace does, Headspace empowers you to deal with it or to just take that breath in order to meet that challenge, because nobody is going to come.*

C: *And to see the wealth of other experiences that people are having, so if you've not come across that and thought about it you've got that kind of wealth of sharing, you kind of go ooh, I know who to chat to about this because I've heard from them that they've gone through that, or that you'll just be forewarned 'I'm going to be very careful about any politicians getting in touch with us' I'm going to be very careful, you know, it's like I'm not going to be quite so naive, you've learnt from other peoples experiences.*

A: *So your practise does change do you think?*

D: *Definitely, yeah.*

G: *I think you're practice changes but I also think it validates the practise you have, because you have that force within the room that says you're absolutely right, you're justified in that, because the Headship is lonely, it continues to be very lonely, and it gets lonelier because we have more to deal with, more to address, more to consider, so having something like this you've got that safe-haven if you like to talk professionally about the things that concern you as a Head but also concern you as a person, as in a practitioner, because yes we're all Heads but I think there's a collective here that we're all very similar in our practice and the way we linked it empowers us.*

D: *I always had a problem with people (C: not people) with the concept of Headship being lonely, and I'm not having a go at you in any way shape or form, but people have said it to me before and people said it's the loneliest job in the world and I think it is if you make it the loneliest job in the world, but you can take steps to make it not the loneliest job in the world, by the people who surround you and being away from Headspace a little bit and then coming back to it, it was then I realised that the loneliness was growing again, now do something different I got busy with other things, and that stopped it being a lonely job because there was other connections with other folk and then when they started disappearing, it was that Headspace was actually that useful space for me to reflect on the positivity and the way that I am if I'm being positive or negative about the situation I'm in, and Headspace has stopped it from being a lonely thing.*

G: *I don't disagree with you, I think you're absolutely right and I think in my role what experience has taught me is I've had the*

confidence and ability to be able to choose the groups I collaborate and network with and I choose those based on the confidence I have in my own abilities and this group has supported that, so now I work with a disadvantaged group I've been involved with the diocese I'm in the IEP, that's underpinned by what we've done here to empower me, If I didn't have the guts by being empowered here to get into that I would go back to being very lonely and at the moment I am feeling lonely because the network that I'm supposed to have for over occupancy in school is not there, that's environmental as in terms of where I am in my school and what's going on in my school, now I feel stronger now than I felt when I walked in this morning, because of listening, because of reflecting, because of taking time out and having reaffirmed, do you know what? I'm doing a good job.

A: *Do you think that's always the case, you know that question I asked about does the atmosphere change during a session?*

F: *I think it does, It's very serious again now but we're all aware of it, we're all aware of what we want to get out of it so I feel that we're able to control it, you walked in this morning, coasting school, coasting school, we had some positivity, we had some negativity but it comes back to we all ask open questions that formulates you know.*

G: *And it comes back to it's all just part of the journey, it's ebbs and flows isn't it all the time, and actually on a scale of 1 to 10 when 10 means death, in 6 weeks time is it going to be chip paper, does it really matter, I really don't care about the coasting schools, I don't give one at all because I know hand on heart I do the best for those children, what they say in terms of my response it'll either be great or it'll be pants, they will get back in touch and they will tell me what decision they are going to make and I don't actually care because I think what I've done in that school, what my children and staff can show in terms of progress, we're never going to tick those boxes really for a while, it's going to take time, I've made peace with that.*

C: *Plus as well, it's your own, when I go into school, I'm not going in with rose coloured specs and I have worked in places whereby, and I'm validating my judgements here, and I have gone to look at other schools, "it must be terrible for you there" well not really, I get another person I can work with I've not got an issue with that, I think it's absolutely fantastic, I'm already here, we're already doing this, this and this, you've identified*

the problem with the year 1 teacher that I've already identified, you know, it's not an issue and if I hadn't it gives us that chance to reflect and open it up and have another look at it and go, you know, that's what the whole system is for isn't it. Are we failing our children? Absolutely not, absolutely not, on a daily basis I see what their doing, and their like...hundred miles an hour, I open their books and look at that and the attitude of the children, their going look at this, look at this, you know are we failing them, absolutely not, so I'm making sure that things are ok for people on a daily basis, but I think the resilience around it has to be that you have got that confidence in yourself as well hasn't it otherwise it's well should I be giving it up, and I think the people that went at the bottom of the league table, I've had discussions with the [names a cluster of schools] they've had a terrible Christmas, really been upset emails have been flying all around, not that I was aware of it because I didn't do emails at Christmas, but you know, they were really, really upset because they didn't know what their parents were going to say, well I'm not upset, I know the governors are going to have my back, I know my parents love me apart from the ones that don't, and there's always going to be some that don't, what is going to happen at the end of the day, so I might lose a couple of kids or families but if that is the case that's the case, it's out of my control, there's things that I can do and things that I can't do.

F: *Coming back to the Headspace, we sit here and however bad it is in our schools, when we come to here and share it, you've just said it, it is part of the job isn't it, actually when we dissect it and reflect we do identify the positive impact of outcomes for our children.*

E: *When we go back to the atmosphere, I think the atmosphere of this group has grown, it's been a journey since when we first got here, because I feel so comfortable with this group now that I could just offload absolutely anything even if it's from my personal life or if it's from school so it doesn't matter what is being said within this room because I have full confidence and trust in absolutely everybody sitting in this room, so from that the atmosphere has really grown and that's been a really important journey for us as a group.*

A: *When C was mentioning before about someone in the other group and who said it was almost a waste of time, didn't really by into it, wasn't really very useful and we were all kind of staggered by that if we reflect back where we started our group was much bigger (we've done this before our group was much bigger and we've kind of had a chat about why that might be*

that we've kind of lost people along the way) and maybe because we are now such a tight group there's less inclination for those people who've gone to come back, who you were talking about before, [names a Headteacher who has left the group] she's less likely to come back now because she probably thinks, you've all been together years and times gone by, I mean, I don't know how you felt D after coming back even after 1 year.

D: *I think you know, when you've missed it though, she wasn't here long enough to know, she wasn't there long enough at the start of it I think, Sarah, it's a different thing isn't it, she was here only for few sessions wasn't she. It's funny, I think it's telling, you don't hear about our group outside, you hear conversations whipping round the local authority about other groups and you never hear anything mentioned about our Headspace group, but pretty much everybody here has heard something about the group downstairs, is there a confidentiality thing that means there not dealing with it in the same way that we deal with what goes on in our group that makes everybody feel comfortable and feel they want to share, there must be a difference in some way.*

C: *The boundaries were set up and I think that that is something but you have to have an opt into that I remember I came into Headspace and I'd already been told by somebody who had been on a previous, the year before Headspace that oh god, it's an absolute waste of time people sitting down going round sharing...exactly the same response as the lady...*

F: *Superficially sharing the joy of the week, it's very cheesy and twee (is that the word?) and it's meaningful for us because we make it meaningful you know, and I had to really think about that*

B: *But it makes you smile as well doesn't it?*

F: *You've got to have that acceptance, that is why we're doing it.*

C: *And that comes back to your unconscious bias and mindfulness as well, it teaches you mindfulness and training this terrible, terrible beastie which it can be, with addictions and all sorts of things and with our perception and stuff because we need to be seeing the positives, you know we need to be seeing those*

things, you know.

A: *Does it matter now that we're not as structured, does it matter?*

F: *I was very nervous about it being less structured, I hope it doesn't just become what the first half hour is when we just catch up on news and it hasn't because I don't think we've let it.*

C: *I think that we always have, we've continued the structure from last year people kind of bringing things linking to our wellbeing as well as linking to our abilities and capacities within school and bringing it back to that, and I think that's quite an important element. Do you know what I think it could easily get to a situation whereby you can't step away from it can we really reflect upon new things that are coming out, new research or those type of things in our about us in our role as people as humans and how we help other people to be humans within their role so I do think there's an important element as far as that's concerned on that reflection, but that's a personal view and I do think its important to have the structure, we've kept to the structure of oh is it time for us to start too and there's usually somebody oh H is a wonderful mother and all of this which kind of pops us onto well actually is it time for us to do this...and moving this situation on or it could just be that just goes round, I think that would be a dangerous place to be*

A: *So because we've got H, and we're semi-structured?*

B: *I like the flexibility of it, you can do the joys at the beginning, the end in the middle or whenever we remember but it's there somewhere and I think it probably is Alex actually when you mention it, she's really good at thinking actually do you what, we don't need to go much lower than this because we've all had a good moan, got it off our chest, lets do a joy and its at the right time to sort of pitching it at the right time to bring you up again.*

A: *So even in a session the atmosphere changes? So we hold it all in, this is only my view obviously, we hold it all in, we arrive here, we're all like erh, like you said I just need to say something get it off your chest and then in the 3 or 4 hours we're here we all arrive like and this and that and coasting school and lead tables in the paper and then who we are at the end of the session.*

- F: *But 4 or 5 weeks after Headspace I'm looking in the diary, when is the next meeting coming up.*
- B: *What I think has helped me personally as a technically challenged person, whatsapp thing is great...can somebody help, I think we've probably done this bumph... I have yeah don't worry.... but its that immediate oh my goodness what do I do with this I don't have to wait for this session to just get those quick answers and things just whatsapp it.*
- A: *The whatsapp thing that's developed from here is another layer of support we don't have to wait for a term or half term to get it instantaneously, most modern communications is instantaneous now isn't it.*
- E: *Sometimes it's nice to get a whatsapp that's really kind of just stupid (A: like dressing up) yeah because I was dressed up as Pudsey bear (F: you're just an exhibitionist) I am an exhibitionist (C: my favourite was the elf in the snow) You know what I like about whatsapp, when you see people's living rooms...*

Session 4: Competition between schools – does it exist and why?
24/03/2017

Duration: 34:47

G: *I think it depends where you work and the demographics EIP which you are possibly in, I think historically where I work there has been competition, it depends on the style of leadership whether or not there is competition, for me if you are passionate about children and doing the best for those children that can be different to empire building which I think there are colleagues I know that are doing that and they don't engage with you in the same way when you are, you've got mobility in terms of children.*

C: *Yeah, I think there's a different outlook by different Heads in which children come to the school. From discussions that I have, I hear of children going to a certain school and I think Yes! Because I know they are going to get the support the help, things that they need rather than someone just trying to move them on as quickly as they can, but as far as competition, it's not a personal view that I have and I have a very supportive network, absolutely brilliant support like from [names a Head] from [names a school] those type of things, whereby you connect and connect on different levels and I think as your relationships grow, as you get to know Heads longer you can understand people's different attitudes, as a [names a cluster of school] cluster we're trying to grow that kind of feeling of [names a cluster of schools] schools altogether, this is for children of [names an area] within that cluster there is a heck of a lot of different views and sides of the fence and I think that one of our jobs, you want collaboratives you want people to work together, and not allowing rifts to occur and drive and get bigger so that people keep the kiddies at the Head of it, the children at the Head of it. I think invariably when people work at really, really tough schools there tends to be, maybe at their lowest moments, oh well we're the sink school or you maybe have someone round the table that might say something that really kills you, we're not a bottom five, we're not a bottom school. You know we're not a bottom school, we're a cracking school.*

F: *I don't think it just counts for data either, because when I go to our EIP I am the school with the special children, look at you smiling (A: because I'm not in your EIP, because I wasn't wanted, and that was said) but we had a volleyball competition yesterday and so all the cluster schools were there, and I took my lot along and at the end of the first game even two minutes into the first game, one of my children made mistake and seconds later she made another one and she just bit her thumb and went "I can't do it" and she cried and sat down at the side and I went, Halt the game, we were playing on of our EIP and*

they just don't get it, they just don't the church school thing and I dragged her back on it wasn't team teacher handling or anything it was I'm going to pull your arm out of your socket so you'd better come with me and I said "you are a [names her school] you stay there I don't care you start the game, you finish the game and put a bloody smile on your face" and by the end of the tournament she'd got a hat trick of points on her serve, she couldn't serve to start with, it went backwards it hit people in the face, she was like "oh I'm crisis aren't I", and I said "no you're amazing!" and when her first hit went over the net her face was massive, and that it what teaching is about for me. But for other people in my cluster in our cluster it isn't and the teacher it comes from the staff, they are there to win.

- E: *It comes from the leadership, in my view, I would say there's a shift to a culture of collaboration between schools and it's just a shift but there are some that don't seem to have been brought along on that journey of collaboration (G: I think that that's a choice that they make) and it's a choice from the leadership and it's the culture that is within that school and it does feed down from the top, there are still some people, because I know we are a very inclusive school, yeah we are little leafy [names the school] and you get that reputation but we do have lots of children that are now coming into the school with social and communication difficulties because you get that reputation of being inclusive and we work alongside the autism team etc. and we welcome that.*
- C: *But it's all growing for everybody isn't it, I've had people who have said, do you know what I've got those needs and needs for looking out you can't be surviving by yourself it's too much of a complex job isn't it?*
- E: *I do think that there are, I might be speaking out of turn, but with some leaders of other schools think, oh I don't think this school is working for you but there's this other school down the road that would be perfect for you, [C: but they do!] and it's only my perception is that they've got to be up here for data, data blah blah so therefore I don't need this perception of this person is not going to be able to give me that. [A: so it IS about competition?]*
- C: *But what you were saying was...and why, why is it, because we've got a top down pressure, I don't blame the Heads in this position because they've had to beef themselves up, haven't they, they've got to prove it round the governor table, they've got to see themselves in the paper at the top of the table.*
- E: *It's not what you see as a priority though is it.*

- C: *You celebrate that though, that's what you're going for and you've promoted it you've stuck it on a banner, you've stuck it in the outside world, actually you've something you've got to keep achieving haven't you, year after year after year you've got to be top of the league and that's what the issue is, we play that game, don't worry about what they're producing because they are always going to do that.*
- E: *So is that the system then, that is failing [C: it's the OFSTED system] it's the OFSTED system and the league tables where people do feel pressure, but then it's still a choice, you choose what the ethos of your school is, if you are strong in the abilities this is a children's centre this is an inclusive school no matter who you are, what you are and how you are, you may not necessary win the vote to be top of the league table, but then you've got happy staff and very happy children.*
- F: *Some people think to win (E: is the most important thing) well is that you are first you are top.*
- A: *So would a person who is like that ever choose a school like mine or yours?*
- All: *No.*
- C: *And I know a teacher that advised me and had some wonderful things to tell me, he said don't go to the school that you are going to choose a school in a kind of leafy area, because I have done tough schools and you don't get anything out of it. I'd taught in vulnerable schools and I'd taught at [names a school] and [names a school] to me...I wasn't needed there, you know, those kids weren't going to make it no matter what, and I had to come away from that.*
- F: *Isn't it interesting that the winning mentality Heads are no longer in this process.*
- C: *I am though, I am.*
- F: *But winning what, (C: on my terms though) but winning for you is different. If the school down the road got requires improvement would you be like ha we're better than you! If the school down the road got requires improvement (C: gutted, I'd be gutted) right, so whereas if I got requires improvement [names a school] would not be gutted for us, I would not get an email from that Headteacher.*
- C: *I was gutted that OFSTED didn't give them outstanding, because they'd pinned all their hopes on it and that kind of*

really shook them to their foundation (who's that sorry) and shook her and she thinks her whole career has gone.

- D: *But that's what she attaches to it and different people attach different things to it. Like with [names a school] down the road they're good at the moment, I think they're outstanding though, but if they get the outstanding stamp it will be detrimental to us because the kids will shift in that direction and parents in our area, and I don't want to cause any offence here, parents will look at OFSTED reports and will attach some importance to it for their choice, kids in your area, this is a sweeping statement sorry if I offend, parents in your area want something different they don't care about the OFSTED report and parents won't shift their kids because they're happy you are looking after them for whatever they need. Parents in [names the school] the first RI the hall was full of parents telling me that it's not good enough and going at us for it and if we got another RI they said they would move their kids and they said they would, and it's a different thing, different schools need different things, need a different category of success that you work towards and that's ok, but it's the competition for good, outstanding or whatever, it does exist and for some schools it has to exist because it is part of what we do for some schools it doesn't have to exist because you're not measuring yourselves.*
- C: *But if you took that away then you wouldn't have that issue would, you'd have people choosing to go to their local school and if it was actually the education or the experience of coming to the school wasn't good enough, they would choose somewhere else, they would make that choice, really knowing rather than a one-shot choice depending on what the OFSTED.*
- D: *We don't push the OFSTED thing that's important.*
- A: *It's a policy that was implemented by government to give parents the ownership of where they sent their children, which creates a market choice.*
- C: *Well you used to be able to go to your local school, you used to be able to walk your child to your local school And the mix of children was much, much better wasn't it? And less selective, less about yummy mummies doing their research on mums' net and choosing the school that they wanted and all their mates went to so their children got the social group that they wanted, but it is.*
- A: *It is market forces, because would you get in your 4WD and drive all the way to names a school or would you walk to [names a school] you've got to make that decision haven't you?*

- C: *They believe they are making the best decision for the children by using the information, but the information is skewed.*
- D: *It's not skewed it's a bench mark for choice, and then they go and look at all our schools to actually feel what they're like and understand what they're like, but it's that that gets them through the door in the first place, whether they come to look at our school or not and if they've only got 2 hours to do it on the day they're going to pick the best schools to go and look at or the outstanding schools.*
- C: *My sister's doing it at the moment because she's moving her child whose in secondary school, whose having a bad time, she's going to be moving her, she's trying to make a choice and just doesn't know what to do, but she's going to private and she's paying and she's got this list, and I've said you've just got to keep going back and keep delving into what the real heart of the school is and not what the show is.*
- D: *How does it feel?*
- H: *I think a lot of it is down to parents, parents make schools a competition, especially for us in our rural area we don't have housing estates to pull our children from, something like 48 of my 54 families drive to my school because they don't live there, so I am in competition with all the other schools in the area, as we said parents look at OFSTED but they don't understand it, [E: that's huge] they put a great deal of faith in it, we know that it depends on who walks through the door and what sort of a day their having and what their own personal belief and commitment is, it's not a fair system but it's the only system that parents have.*
- E: *Ofsted changes all the time. They don't really get that actually good schools that's a spectrum, you could be just good, you could be very, very good it's a big, big broad spectrum. If they see the word good that's it.*
- C: *They're going to change that system, but I don't think that's going to make it better, the whole thing of splitting off the year 1A, 1B, 1C goods going to change.*
- A: *So what's the difference between outstanding, good and satisfactory*
- G: *I think outstanding is going to go*
- A: *But see what I mean what's the different between 1 and outstanding, 2 and good, 3 ...*

- C: *We're still playing that game though, let's stop playing the game and say we're not interested we don't want. You're either failing your children or not failing your children because if you're not failing your children your working bloody hard to make sure everybody is doing what they should be doing, if you can have your chat and say do you check groups – yes, do you You're doing everything that that good school is doing over there, you are now a good school because you are doing everything that you should be doing, that they are doing.*
- A: *But that's judging the process as opposed to ...*
- C: *It is, I know that, but the outcome would be different depending on whether my kiddies have slept, been abused, I'm sorry (some children just won't get there no matter how much you've given them, they're children for goodness sake), I'm marching this weekend, but what they're saying is oh other schools in your circumstances are doing... oh right ok, other schools with exact the same amount of money is that what we're saying or are we saying with the same demographic, because the demographic that I have in [names the area] is not given the same amount of money as they're given in Islington London which you're comparing the results with. My staff are poorly I've not got people in that I've employed therefore my progress has gone down this half term in reception and another year group and I've got somebody else who's disappeared on maternity leave again, I'm sorry it's not the same circumstances, if I can get my staff to a certain level of training and they then can actually do what I've asked them to do, with the same amount of money, ok so how many people have you got supporting that progress, you've got 4 in there, ok, you know I do check the same thing, but unfortunately I do train my staff and then my staff get to a point whereby I've had all my training C thank you so much I'm all ready to go off and do a cracking job somewhere else where it's going to be a damn site easier, and I'm like arh shit.. thanks for that, thanks for that.*
- E: *That's the way it is in education, parents don't understand, you have good teachers you train them up but they move, if you've done your job properly they're going to move because you've given them the training they've improved their career they're going to branch out and do other things, that's the work of education.*
- C: *They say oh that's what happens with RI schools, I said "my school and staff are cracking but they've got this impression that life is easier somewhere else"*

- E: *But it happens in every school because if you do your job properly as a Head and train your staff they're going to want to move on and progress, it's your obligation as a Headteacher.*
- A: *It is your obligation isn't it, professional expectation that you will have a succession plan?*
- E: *We've all got a succession plan and that will do you a lot of good won't it, it does your children good and your staff.*
- C: *But the competition bit, that's why I'm going academy, everyone in my academy and we're all into this for different reasons, we've got someone at the top you know with all the polo players and we've got whatever... everybody round that table is there for each other and that is what and that's what we're looking for, we have to change from this local authority thing because it's too big, I've got to get with other people, I've got to get with that expertise that supports us and the types of circumstances that I'm in that's why I specifically looked for that type of expertise that says in these circumstances we are managing to do it and even so when I look at it you know, cards on the table, how have you managed to do it, and he said "because I've got another arm which is a spiral which brings in the money which means I can put more staff in to my school.*
- D: *Going back to competition, I feel less competition with other schools and it feels like there's less competition between Heads the [names the cluster of schools] cluster is sort of bringing everybody in [names an area] together isn't it, it seems to be working quite nicely in its slow and very gently way people are sort of beginning to bond and get (H: talking) yeah and there is a collaboration and within that group there seems to be less competition, but I don't know whether there is less competition or just me being a Head for 4 years actually I'm paying less attention to it because I get what a better school is about and what's my criteria for (E and G: it is about collaboration) but it does feel a bit gentle but you still get people going into that group when they've had OFSTED going "ah I just got good" and they're disappointed they didn't get the outstanding which feeds that competition for people, they wanted to be outstanding.*
- A: *Do they think it's a value judgement on them (all: yes) then it's about ego?*
- D: *I know certain people within that group that wouldn't care if you walked in and said you got RI or whatever it doesn't Eer but there is a few people where it still exists.*
- A: *But there's a school in [names an area] which is the bigger school, you probably know it, and the Head there, the previous*

Head there, the one whose going told everybody that this school after OFSTED oh great, the school was good in everything, the schools outstanding in everything bar the judgements and we were like what does that mean?

Outstanding in everything bar the judgements, so it was a good then, and she said "yes but it wasn't good it was outstanding in everything bar the judgements" anyway, she's now gone and it turns out that it isn't, it's a coasting so they kept that right under the radar, that school which is the Titanic of the Local Authority is up the road from my school was heralded as the eco school, the beacon Head has gone there and swooped in and actually its coasting (which school are we talking about) the one in [names an area] biggest school and it's coasting and I sat next to the acting Head there at a conference saying ah it's a bit crap we're coasting blah blah blah and he never said a peep and he was the one who was devo'd when his school, a school on top of a hill got good, welcome to our world. And do you know what makes me feel really cringy I can say honestly I take no pleasure in people not doing well or they're school is being judged poorly, but I take a tiny grain of pleasure and I'm just going to admit it, in people who like to drag others down actually being on a level playing field, and this is me being honest, if you got requires improvement I would say "I feel really shit for you, anything we can do to help" if you did it would be the same, but when that Head got good I thought ah, you didn't want me in your cluster because you thought I wasn't good enough, you didn't want to say well done to my ICT lead who'd trained over 200 people in your cluster, you didn't even want to say well done by email, well thanks for that, he was the only Headteacher that didn't, it was pointless and a waste of time, thanks very much (F: is that what he said) yeah, and yet the feedback that I got was that his staff talked all the way through it, a whole days' worth of training. If they were that good why didn't they organise the training? Just saying, that was organised by me, in my 'crap school'. So, I take no pleasure in anybody "failing", not doing well, but I take a modicum of pleasure in him being brought back down to earth, "do you know what mate you're not as good as you feel you are, as your kind of go around swaggering around that you are, you're not better than any one of us who are working our nuts off every single day, you're no better than any one of us.

G: *He doesn't have a clue.*

D: *Who you talking about?*

F: *[names a Headteacher].*

A: *Bearing in mind (F: he's at [names the school] (C: I don't know any of the people...)) Bearing in mind, you wouldn't want to,*

bearing in mind that that school [names the school] is actually in [names a cluster of schools] they've got three National leaders of education in [names a cluster of schools] not me obviously, nobody knew that the Headteacher of that school had been removed but [names a Head] was asked to sweep in and go and help and it's a bit like, and I know people in authority, I won't tell you who, but I know people who do a bit of work and the attitude is, everyone asks [names a Head] - because what, their advice is better than everyone else's?

G: *He came into my school, because I had a call from the local authority because [names a Head] was my improvement advisor because I am coasting and I am RI and I am due OFSTED, you know the one that was special measures (inaudible all talking) who can be your school improvement advisor, she's going off but she's also got a different role (A: you should have said I want A to do it, I'd have come) she said to me we're thinking [names a Head] and I said, (D: think again) (F: are you joking) that's fine (C: he's not going to give you any help though) but he's not going to give me any hassle either, I don't need any help, I have never needed any help because I've had to do it all on my own from the get-go, because the people that have given me help have been the people like we've just mentioned, who are in so called good schools who come and listen to you offload and then go "I have no idea how to sort it G because I've never come across it".*

C: *Do you know I'm getting some help for the first time ever where I go ooh that's really helping and it's, if you come across her [names a Head] from [names a school] and she's really clear and it helps to clarify, you know sometimes when you kind of go 'dedede' and you get all excited about all this stuff (D: you never go like that) I do and it was lovely.*

G: *Raising attainment group working with the Diocese working with a National leader in education we had our first RAG group where the two governors Deputy and Head Teacher, education consultant from the Diocese, [names an LA representative] the National leader in education and school improvement advisor and they just said "you can't be doing anymore G you need time, you need time for it all to filter through" (C: Absolutely) you know I don't need... I've learnt by doing it all myself.*

A: *You need a trip to Olivander's, get a wand and to go like that, swish!*

D: *Take advantage of having [names a Head] then, he won't necessarily challenge in any way shape or form but actually that's nice you'll get a rubber stamp, stick it in the file, a bit of evidence to support good.*

- G: *Because we're having a teacher and learning review because the Local Authority said to me we need to do a teaching and learning review (again) in September and I said "under no circumstances are you coming back into my school doing a teaching and learning review, I am not having it" however in the RAG group because I have got [names an LA representative] who is ex HMI and who I absolutely respect and because we have not had anybody external for 18 months looking at teaching and learning, I was happy for him to do it (A: because you respect him) and I asked for [names a Head] to do it with him, do you know for whose benefit? [names the LA representative]'s (C: yeah, because he doesn't know) absolutely no clue.*
- A: *To sort of go back to the competition thing and go back to the empire building thing, this is my theory though, people compete not about the schools they try and compete so that they seem to be the next big thing or to try and get a promotion or to try and be who the local authority turn to and I have got an opinion on that and I do think that people like him and [names a Head] they do all of these things A. because they've got the time to because there isn't all the carnage going on back at the ranch they've got time to think, I go and do this, this and this and they're in a good school so they'll get a rubber stamp without doing much and the kids are gonna do well anyway and people are asking them and deferring to them because they look on paper like they're doing this amazing job, and what D said is true before I think, if they are acknowledging things like my school, probably your school, probably yours are the worst in the authority I don't even have someone ring me up and say do you know what we know it's really hard, even an email, someone thinks, better send her an email, we know it's really tough, keep going.*
- G: *Do you know where I do get that from, I get it from the diocese because they have said G we need you on our school improvement team and [names a Diocesan representative] has said I'm not having anybody else I need you and my governors (F: won't let you) well they are now because (A: been told) and I am doing it, because they actually recognise what you're doing at the chalkface, and they're not governed by...*
- A: *I went to see somebody in [names an area] last week... I do supervision safeguarding because we get so many probably like you guys do and the [names the LA] does supervision with me in another school in [names the area] and we turned up the other day and I'd had that thing the other morning and I just thought oh my god, I'd stupidly checked my emails at 4 in the morning, don't ask me why, I was waiting for something from the budge officer, [D and E laughing] anyway I woke up and*

thought I wonder if she's responded to me, because I'm stupid, I woke up and thought I'll check it now, so do you know what, this crazy parent had sent me an email at 3.28 in the morning, and I was like oh my god, so in the morning at 9 I was on the phone to the Countess of Chester and then I had my supervision, anyway, I got there and normally I wait and go last but that day I said I'm actually going to go first because this is freaking me out and it's just happened, so I give my spiel you can do this, you can do that... I said thank god that's the list I've got I just wanted to check I hadn't missed anything so that when we had finished I could go back and do it and we went over to this other Headteacher and she started to speak and she is in a coasting school, RI, really rough area, and she started speaking and said, well I've got this child and just went bumph and burst into tears, and we're just... and she said I actually rang K up yesterday and I can't do this anymore. I actually can't do this anymore, it's ruining my life and it was the most horrible minute because she doesn't get people ringing her saying "we know where you work, we know you're surrounded by 4 tower blocks and we know you do a lot and we know you work really hard" she doesn't get anything like that from anybody, what she gets is people saying "well were from the [names a cluster of schools] we've come to tell you what to do...and this and that" and she's like, really! Think I know my school better than you, however you are the [names a cluster of schools] so I'll let you say what you like and I think everyone is done unto when they're in a tricky situation what they need isn't people doing unto, what they need is people saying you need a few more quid because you need a few more people in there we know that to be there kids need this much, but in your school actually its more fair, we're talking about fair and equality, and you need a few more people working with your children to get them anywhere near.

C: *Your staff are going to be a bit more knackered, they're going to need more PPA, because you've got to make it better for them to come to your school, than somewhere else, this school you'll get a day's PPA a week in order for you to be able to do what you need to do and to be able to cope with what you have to cope with on a daily basis.*

A: *And I think that's a real shame in terms of funding, what it will do is bring this divide in even more of if you're in a school where you can kind of survive with the funding you've got and still be a good school, you'll be alright, but if you've got a school that can't really survive on the funding you've got now and it becomes less it's going to become even more burdensome to try and get good staff and if you can't get good staff you're NEVER going to get any hope in hell...*

- C: *It's when someone turns around to me and says "we've got so many applicants for your jobs" and you're like f...*
- A: *...Yeah because who would want to work...*
- C: *It's a really, really tough school, I'll be honest with you and unless you want to be absolutely cracking, if you want a 9 to 5 hah, bye, bye.*
- D: *Part of me does think that you need to take control of it, your colleague there, yes, she's being done to but you don't have to be done to, it's your school.*
- A: *But I think it's like a mindset, you know when we all get down and we come here and we're like I needed Headspace this week, I just wanted to freak out, she's not in Headspace and I think (D: whose choice is that?) what network does she have, she's been there 10 years (C: but you can develop a network you can find ways) right (D: team around you) and you've got to be the right sort of person to do that (C: and your governors, and if that's ok, that's what I have and I'm really, really chuffed) but sometimes your governors, you've got no choice over them.*
- D: *You've got choice over other things, you've got a choice about letting people in the door and actually like you make some choices and you tailor make as it is, actually she's got that option (C: but what makes you tough enough to do that then) perhaps its having the confidence.*
- A: *What makes you tough enough though to make you say no you're not coming in and I think it's a confidence thing.*
- G: *I think it's experience and it's like I am not the person I was 3 years ago and that comes back to the joy that I will share after, where I have (A: there's no space for joy today...laugh) challenged and I have had to basically grown a pair and do you know what actually I am just as capable and my opinion is as valid and I do know better than you because of the level of experience that I have and ultimately you will shut up and listen.*
- A: *So, your experience in 3 years though is more than somebody like [names a Head] who's been in teaching...(absolutely) and that happened to me with _____ who had been a Head 20 odd years who was tasked to come in and 'sort me out' and sat in a room and was like eh "I can't offer you any help because I've never done anything like this" (G: he was my support) and he was lovely to me.*

- C: *To be fair to him [names a Head] has done his bit, he has been there, but I think he's forgotten and he's now got little strategies.*
- G: *To be fair to [names an LA representative], the whole raising attainment group for me that's got [names a list of LA representatives] is about them ticking a box and about them in a formal capacity to be able to say and refer back to OFSTED and the RSC, she's doing everything she can they are rubber stamping that, they are not coming in and saying do this, do this, do this, that was [names the union representative] on the phone just now saying, "G you haven't got an issue with your attendance", they are being very supportive and [names a Head] will say to me I know what it's like, and he was at [names a school] and he has been the one that would fight for me to say you are doing the school improvement stuff because he would recognise it.*
- C: *I think it would be only when you're not doing it that he would be able to be much help and therefore....*
- G: *But I do think it's the local authority ticking boxes by putting him in.*
- D: *I think with a lot of these people well they're not accountable, you're accountable for your school and if they're not responsible for fixing it for you, they're there in a different capacity, and I think sometimes their role gets a bit clouded and if they can come and help in one way, even if you have another conversation about data so you can articulate it a bit better the next time you talk to OFSTED about it, there's been a bit of a benefit. I'm not standing up for [names a Head] because he was my advisor to (A: I don't mind him, he's quite harmless) yeah, he is, but I mean take what you can from these things and then dispose of it, make what you can of it, which is what you obviously do isn't it.*

Session 5: Ofsted, impact on careers and reputation and Autonomy
12/05/2017

Duration: 25:23

G: *I think the OFSTED one is the one that I can consider more easily and I think that and I think it does and doesn't affect your reputation and the impact your reputation, I think for the lay person who just looks at OFSTED as the standard for categorising schools in terms of performance and that's all that they look at, I think it does. I think if people understood more about the framework and that the framework doesn't actually fit, ANY school, really there is no school that fits that framework its adhered to in order to make judgements if people had autonomy to do best fit judgements in their area then that would be a true reflection of the school because there are limiting judgements I think that can then impact on the reputation or otherwise that somebody may have.*

A: *So the Head of the school?*

G: *The Head AND the school but particularly of the Head, because your name is on it, I think if you are a school that has been struggling or has problems and you have the ability to have somebody come in and listen and see what your school is really like and I think that that can affect your reputation in a positive way regardless of either being in a category or having and RI judgement or otherwise and I think that is you as a Head being open to and being honest about what you're doing as a school and being reflective solution focused as a practitioner.*

C: *What do you mean by reputation? Reputation with who? We've got a reputation within this group, we've also got a reputation with a cluster, we've got a reputation with... do you mean does it influence you getting jobs, does it influence those kind of things, because if its, is it about your reputation influenced negatively for getting a job, because we know a lot of people who have progressed very well doing you know, some people have progressed well into high jobs not doing a good job (G: absolutely) because they're good at interviews, are they good at applications.*

A: *But is that anything to do with an OFSTED judgement?*

C: *Your OFSTED judgement is... I think that people are very, very aware of what that game is, you know if you're in a school.*

A: *With the practitioners working in education.*

F: *I don't think they're going to frown upon a practitioner who has had four outstanding OFSTEDs judgements are you?*

- C: *You are going to frown upon somebody who has had an OFSTED judgement how many years ago (2008) set an outstanding and then going out saying yeah we are, a lot of people in that position are saying well now we're not, if we're comparing ourselves with other people in fairness were finding ourselves quite short actually, and it's the consistency in that, I could be saying to you hand on heart I'm doing exactly the same job as somebody else is doing in exactly the same way in an outstanding school, if not better, because I have got all my paperwork in place, I do my moderation, we talk about professional development we do all that training, we've done all of these different things, your luck is 1, do I have staff members who can deal with the school that you're in, some staff members will do very, very well in the good or outstanding because of the area that they're in.*
- A: *That's what I was going to say, does it matter what catchment area you are in?*
- C and G: *Course it does!!*
- A: *Because you can be an outstanding, are you an outstanding Head because you're in an outstanding school, because your all talking about a framework that judges whether a school is outstanding or not based on data.*
- C: *It's all outcomes, I've got somebody who is doing a cracking job and she's gone for a second day and she'll be fighting on her results, we're always fighting on our results but you can go and have a look and comparative to your school yeah you're doing the exact same thing so that your framework should be, are you doing this, this and this if you are, I'm sorry you're sacking a good school because you could pick up all of that and stick it into another school and be an absolute cracking job and we know that, and we know that, it's that emperor's new clothes time you can't turn round and say this child is the same whether they're fed clothed looked after and all those, is going to make the same progress. What they say is, it's "like schools", yeah but like schools C are doing the same as you, sorry, you're not looking at like schools are you, because we've now discovered that they're on a lot more money than what we're having so it's not even like, and we know it's look of the draw if you put a cracking teacher in there that hasn't got a problem with health and safety who hasn't got a problem with all sorts of things and your school will be absolutely fine, so we are dealing very, very well with these circumstances in itself means you should be doing the job you're doing.*

- H: *From a parent's perspective our reputation is key, [names her school] hasn't had an OFSTED since 2008, in 2013 they got a letter from whoever to say you've maintained your standard of an outstanding school, and we have people who come and say you had an outstanding in 2008 would you be outstanding now? I say in all honesty, probably not, because the regime we were inspected on in 2008 has (A: had four changes) is nothing like the regime now and so in my heart of hearts we are a good school with outstanding features, but if we get a next OFSTED to come to be quite honest with you we would be good and they look at me and 'oh' (C: because they don't understand it) and you can see them thinking, oh I want to send my child to an outstanding school and other parents say that's really refreshing that you've been so honest. But coming back to your reputation within the profession, everybody within the profession knows what an arse OFSTED is so I don't think and I know some Headteachers like we said who have muddled through who their SLT have dragged them up seem to move on and get a good school get a good job, and you think well actually I don't rate you as a professional.*
- C: *Your reputation is built up on that, to have someone turn around and tell you, we don't do that kind of thing, we don't do looking after families, you know we don't do... it's just ridiculous and we don't pander to that it's just ridiculous, they're just need mums then you know that's the chip in people's reputation, it doesn't matter where they're sat then does it.*
- A: *You guys think it's really built on professional respect, you've got...if us as Heads have got respect for other Heads because they kind of walk the walk and talk the talk then their reputation in our eyes is a lot higher than someone who is working in a lovely area works that's an outstanding school, who's kids are fed and watered and cared for, whose parents aspire them going to an outstanding school because they aspire to them doing well, then the likelihood is whether they're a good Head or not they're still going to lead an outstanding school because the judgement is based on the data those children will produce as opposed to the quality of the people driving that school forward.*
- C: *Well you know it's getting virtually impossible now on the new framework to get outstanding so therefore it is actually demotivating for staff because we're always setting ourselves that challenge of that next step, next step, next step up (but is it attainable) but although we know of some schools getting it but then let's just unpick and say are we all on that same level playing field (no) is everybody getting the same funding (no) and is everybody got the same quality of candidates coming into their area, all of those kind of things, you can't then*

judgement call other people, it is only given credit if we give it credit, so stop putting up the outstanding banners, stop doing all of those different things, and stop paying attention to the league tables, they'll always be people at the top and they'll always be people at the bottom and the more we pay attention to that and the more we give it value.

A: *Don't you think that is inherent in the structure that we've got?*

H: *It does now but it didn't used to be.*

A: *When you say didn't used to be was that before OFSTED was around?*

H: *I would say before the National Curriculum really. When their children went to the school down the road.*

A: *But the parents got given the autonomy to choose what school their children went to.*

C: *Not somebody who's been in prison and done absolutely horrendous things to his family and he had the right to forego... you know when I was saying this child was special schools and because Daddy didn't agree with it, I'm sorry Daddy's view shouldn't come into consideration, when you've broken the laws of the country, you've abused your own family and now you're telling me he can't go into the specials provision that all the professionals say he should have, I'm sorry that's just ridiculous isn't it, they should be taking them to the local school but then again some people say my local school, I don't want to be there I want to be with you, brilliant, and I'm trying as much as possible to say no, no, no, you say that's brill the child is going to do good, here's our results and it's not usually in that circumstance is it?*

A: *So do you think there is an incentive then for people based on results, do you think there is an incentive for Head teachers to sort of dissuade children who are not going to do well?*

H: *We all know that happens, the way that you word it when you give them the show round, when you put obstacles in the place, we all know that that happens.*

C: *But we're having very open discussions at [names the cluster of schools] Cluster about it and nobody's pulling the punches as far as that's concerned, we know that if they say they want to place a troubled child or whatever we get the call, oh and I know that Heads have said that we've not got the provision but we know that [names a school] has - go and chat to them because we haven't got the teaching assistants but they have,*

and I have said that around, you know we've got 25 people come to that meeting around there and people are like, oh no that would never happen and people make things up, well I can only reflect and I know that people round this table won't do that which is really, really great news because we've all got that joint.... But let me tell you, you know this is your impact because if you place them all in one school that's going to make it really, really tuff for that school and that's not ok, and being arsey with those people is not ok, because they've got a right to have a great education for their child, I love people coming to my school but I do want them to have a local school where the kiddies can play out with their children, friends.

F: I had a bit of a crisis this week, similarly around this point really but it kind of covers both school autonomy as well, we had a pupil that came to us from the community school up the road, end of October, 2 pupils, year 6 and a year 4, disaffected with learning, were unhappy at school, pressure was on from the school regarding attendance and things like that. The year 6 had a bad attitude towards school and mum felt that moving him to us would be the spark that he needed to get him through the year 6 and get him secondary ready. Last week, last Thursday she came to see me, I've put pressure on, he's been swearing a lot in school and you know I've held him to account on that, mum came to see me and said the year 6 child isn't happy he's getting a lot of stomach pains and things like that and he hasn't made many friends, you know he's very streetwise as a young boy a lot of my children are very protected, he doesn't have a lot in common with them, he's on the xbox has a wide access to social media, the rest of the children don't and she said I want to send him back to the community school up the road, that's absolutely fine I said, I'm going to send his brother as well, she said, so I'm not brining 1.... Well that makes sense, I said, you don't drive you live closer to there and he's had most of his education at that school. I then received a phone call after school about quarter to 5 from the Head teacher of the community school and said I will take the year 4 but I'm not taking the year 6 till after SATS, now she's got the autonomy to do that, hasn't she. (all: no, no!) she has.

A: It's the parents asking for an in-year transfer if she's got spaces she should...

F: ...She has 5 working days, 5 school days to make a decision (oh I see, so she sat on the 5 days) so he starts on Monday (that's naughty) so he came to me for SATS and he's working below, I haven't educated him for the whole of his....

- A: *That's shocking! If I can just reassure you, we often have this when children who turn up a week before the SATS what-have-you, and we have to, like you, talk about individual children and say let's break it down to individuals we didn't educated that child, they had been to 14 other schools before they arrived here, when they arrived here they were this, here are their books, they couldn't do it, six weeks later they could do this, it's not much but they've made progress with us, then they sat the SATS as well you know.*
- C: *But who does the writing moderation for them? So you got him for...so he sat the Maths and the reading then he's going to go back so where is the reading school going to fall? Because those to scores presumably are going to be with you, (they should be with both) yeah they've got to take responsibility.*
- A: *Can I just say the converse of this conversation before we get into the nitty gritty, the converse of it is this, if it was the day before census in October (C and G: hmm, she'd have had him) she'd have not even talked to you she'd have said start today, get on my books today.*
- H: *The school down the road did it to me, two of my children came the Monday before and they said they could go if they started on the Monday before the census on the Thursday (you can't do that) they can, they've got the autonomy to do that and that's what I'm saying is it pseudo or is it whatever you want it to be it plays into your area.*
- A: *But everyone plays a game because of the competition, we're competing for children.*
- F: *It's not about the child, he had no friends at my school and yet he'd left and said goodbye to everyone, he had to come back on the Monday and go "oh hi" (C:oh god).*
- A: *We're competing with children because they're money, children equal money, units of cash.*
- F: *Its shit isn't it, schools are becoming a business and it's just shit, sorry to swear but it just is!*
- C: *No, it is. But I do think you will have people who will fight against it and continue to make the right decisions in the interest of the children.*
- F: *I tried to challenge it, I phoned [named a senior LA representative] and said she's SATS dodging, there's absolutely no reason that she can't take... and she put it down*

to the disruption she had to consider whether she can take him back and she would be taking the full 5 days to do that.

- A: *The problem is as well though is it builds poor relationships between colleagues, it enhances that competitive vibe between people which brings me back to the whole point of this, you start off not trusting people because you just don't know whether they can be trusted, you know, what's their angle here, it builds this distrust between people so you can't rely on each other because your directly....if you're the school up the road you're directly competing which is why in a way possibly this [Headspace] works well because none of us are up the road from each other, none of us have got any benefit to you cracking up, you failing, you not taking my kid, there's no benefit of any of that for us but if it's a dog eat dog world, which I do reckon it is to a degree, it's like dog eat dog, it's survival of the fittest it's so Darwinian isn't it?*
- F: *She can't come and ask me for anything now, you know, she never responds to my emails, she's had two children go up there and never contacted me, every time I get a parent that comes down to me from her, I go back and speak to them I phone her and say look, you know I'm not...I've said they've got to come back to you, I don't get any of the professional discourse back.*
- C: *I disagree it's about the cluster though, I would trust [names the cluster of schools] with everything, I really, really would and very respectful and he's across the road.*
- F: *You're in a good cluster and if you're not in a good cluster that trust isn't there.*
- C: *I have got other people within that cluster that you go hmm ok you've got question marks about but you find those people and we are you know....built the [names the cluster of schools] cluster and part of that the expertise of Andrew having worked somewhere else, it's the children of [names the area] so when we sit around that table, when you're having discussions of moral discussions that get raised because you have a high moral chair barking on about stuff and things like that and brings things up and you say but we've got to make the good decisions for the children I think if we continue with that you can sleep at night, if we continue with that and continue to think no stop, I know I've got pressures with my results I know I have, and I'll try and justify that but I'm not going to play that bloody game of not having kiddies where they should be.*

- A: *Do you think that it comes from your childhood, because you were right, some clusters it's the top person who is building that competitive....*
- F: *Yeah I'm not going to my cluster meetings anymore, I'm still being part of the cluster and I'm still paying into it and I'll still access the training but in terms of me sitting around that table with professionals it's not good for my...*
- A: *You should come and join us [names a cluster] you know somebody from [names an area] has come to join, you should come and join us. So yeah autonomy of schools, do we have autonomy in schools as Head teachers (C: no do we eckers) but the government says we have...*
- C: *...No, they can say what they want can't they!*
- F: *I don't know whether you know the person but, well I have heard a rumour and I don't know how true the rumour is (right) (A: we'll talk about that in a minute, just finish this off first).*
- A: *So, yeah autonomy, over to you, we'll have a quick chat and then we'll turn off the tape.*
- F: *Do we have autonomy? Is it pseudo?*
- G: *I think it depends on your governing body to a certain extent, but I think the big picture is no we don't.*
- A: *So we've got autonomy to pay people what we want but we're not given the money to do it. [all agreed] We've got autonomy to set the curriculum we want [all: but we're assessed on a very narrow high stakes]. We've got to teach the information they're going to test the children on.*
- G: *And that if you look at, if you come back to our friend OFSTED if there is an inspector or a team that has a particular preference for a particular curriculum or a particular strength in a curriculum they will, and they're not meant to do it but they do discuss teaching subjects discreetly or having a creative curriculum and they do force that through, so you do feel very vulnerable in the way that you have to justify it.*
- C: *We are doing all sorts of things and I was talking to a Head, and it sounds really exciting and he's at school over in Liverpool and their basis support is coming from Paul McCartney and the funding, you know his schools, his music schools and stuff, and it is a free school and they've set up where everything is kind of creative and is through the arts and sort of like that and built it up so each year they take the year*

group through the school and it's growing and growing, they'll still be assessed on the same system but they have chosen to do something in a very different way and one of the governors whose been there since the beginning is going to be joining us as well so we're hoping to benefit from that and we think that we've got a really great curriculum because it's based around PHSE and those sorts of things, it has to be and we get really good outcomes of all these really wonderful things we do in school.

A: *Are you still worried about your results?*

C: *No, again that's something I can't influence can I, all I can do is try and get the best people in front of my children and support them and do all of those things that I can do, that's all I can do, I sleep really, really well at night, they're going to come and challenge me on my results I've got all of the stuff, case histories, it doesn't make a bloody difference (G: not to you as a Headteacher) because it doesn't make any difference to OFSTED when they come in, that system has to change, and I'm a great believer in if you don't like it change it, and I'm looking towards our structure of academy schools and we will work together, and I'm sorry but I want each of my academy schools to have to have 3 Heads at an OFSTED, I want control back and this is what I'm going to fight for so next time any of our schools, once we've got this system, we've got to hash it out and what it will look like and how it means we are responsible for each other schools, but I'm not having one person go through this shit anymore, sorry, it's not possible this person goes into melt down, and don't get me wrong I'm a bloody fighter and I work really, really well under pressure but I find that really hard that the rest of my school going forward and coming away from that, and I've spoken to many Heads coming away from it going, what could I have done, could I have fought for it more, could I have just put some more evidence in front of them, what was it that I put in front of them which made that decision that I couldn't sway that person, you've got two people OFSTED inspectors in they don't fucking agree with each other, so how are we then allowing these people to come in and be the judgment call on the school, you know actually we've not had great, last year I was oversubscribed massively, this year we've had an OFSTED, there are some people who are making a decision not to come to my school so therefore my mixed community that we were building up isn't mixed anymore because [A: and that's the problem with reputation] we've got young mums or anybody like that look at it and I've had my parents go over to somewhere 'oh we'll go and have a look', we've got a couple of places go to, and so it affects you because it reduces your numbers.*

- A: *Which reduces your money which reduces your capacity to do things, this is what I was saying before and OFSTED inspection does affect your reputation a poor OFSTED does affect your reputation. Not in the way that people care about.*
- G: *I don't think it's you, I think it's your school.*
- A: *It is your school.*
- C: *But I do wonder when I apply somewhere else because I don't really know where I want to go with my career, it would be lovely to get to that good because you would use that wouldn't you?*
- A: *You'd play it wouldn't you, you'd maximise it?*
- C: *A positive reputation would also go as well, so if you're going somewhere where people have ever heard of your school or been in your school, [G: you've got that], but the people that are interviewing you aren't going to be making a decision, but I'm never going to go somewhere that is leafy suburbia, I'm not because I'm made of different stuff, I'm not needed there [G: yea, yeah] , so where I'm needed there going to be looking for that other stuff anyway.*
- A: *It does hinder your ability to do stuff because you lose kids, you lose money, you lose autonomy to pay staff the whole thing to me is interlinked really.*

Session 6: Negative aspects of Headspace, Sustainable Leadership and is it beneficial?

14/07/2017

Length 1:18:28

- A: *Is there anything negative about Headspace?*
- C: *I suppose the only thing that I can think of is that people got to know each other, the joys that you have and that, but I can see that as we get to know each other there might be negatives as well because there might be somebody that you clash with in the group and that's really hard because you want to support everybody, you want everybody to be together and that is very difficult under those circumstances.*
- H: *I think the only negative thing for me in the beginning was how inadequate I felt listening to everybody else and that made me question whether or not I could do the job because everybody else seemed to be so much more confident and competent.*
- F: *But actually as we've gone on we've realised that it wasn't a true reflection of what it was like, I remember thinking that, I've messed up once I'm not as good as these people here, can't do it so yeah there is a negative I think there's a potential for it to be negative In that it could become a bitching session about life and a bitching session about Headship and focus and I think you've got to hold dear the code of Headspace and for it not to... with a different group of people it could just become a spiral of woe is me, my life's harder than your life, no my life's harder than yours it's not a competition, it's not about that and I think that depends on who you've got in the group.*
- C: *It also depends on how that group was set up, and how much you opted into that setting, which is quite important as well. I know that some people have said, you know, they couldn't understand why would you go to there when you just go and see other people winging and stuff, and I was like, well that's not what But I can see for some people it's not the right form, it's not supportive for them so that's ok, they've had that opportunity but they've gone and tried other things and options of support.*
- F: *I think one of the things that J said, you're not there to solve each other's problems, we're here to support so I suppose you could get overloaded with advise if you made that snap judgement, so last time we came and I was like, ok, what do I do with this and there was so much and all I did was wrote a list and I didn't make a decision then and there, I took that list away and I was like, well what ... I tried to follow a path of what would happen for each bit of advice, it's about processing it*

whereas in the early stages of Headspace you might be like oh they said to do this I'm going to go and do it and it might not be the right choice for that situation, you need to reflect on the support.

A: *So when we were chatting about the transition we've all made from the start to the end it's a bit like you feel empowered now even though everyone suggests options you are now strong enough and feel empowered to just wait and take...*

F: *And I suppose I trust my instincts a little bit more now, at first you're like I'm probably wrong and I think looking back on my first Headship that's exactly the position I was in I was looking for a white knight to come and solve the problem for me and I think that Headspace has allowed me to think it's my decision but take on board the 360 around the situation.*

A: *So you're first Headship that you had, that you didn't enjoy, did you have any kind of support like anything from the local authority anything from, like a Headspace group, did you have a group of Heads or a EIP or anything at all?*

F: *I had a very supportive EIP but they were all experienced Heads they'd all been in their position for quite a number of years and they were all outstanding schools, so that in itself was intimidating that also leads you to relying on their advice and ignoring your own instinct. I was given a list of ... but that wasn't through the local authority that was through the Head college (NCTI) and you had to go online and you got so much money to free you up.*

A: *Oh yeah that was after you did your NPQH, you could go online, was it your first year?*

F: *First year of Headship you got £500 a term for your development and you had to pick a supporter on that page, whether or not I was being ill advised I didn't want a stranger I wanted someone I knew and so it was someone in my cluster so I went with [names a Headteacher] from [names an academy] but of course what I didn't get was the message that I got from this Headspace which was for all intents and purposes although it was my second Headship it was my real first... don't try and solve the problem but support, the support I got was trying to solve the problem and I relied on that so when it was time I had to go to the LA they were like you're a baby Head we'll protect you, we'll support you and they did up until they realised that actually under the rule of law governors can't be forced to do anything and then that support all dropped so there was nothing, no Headship, no Headspace. Well that comes onto the next one is Headship like you'd thought it*

would be...but that one, no it wasn't, because I thought it was just, you've got your score you drive the improvements forward and everyone goes forward with you and yes there's challenges but together you just skirt round those challenges not actually climbing over or getting over I suppose I'd been protected as a deputy in that way, whereas I was doing the day to day in the other school as a deputy whereas the Headship was more strategic, ultimately it wasn't me that had to climb over the hedges or barriers although he didn't really either he just skirted round them so I suppose that was my view of what Headship was like.

C: It's your model and I had exactly the same, I **did** feel prepared for Headship I'd been a deputy at a school and moved on... assistant Head, assistant Head and for me having had those 2 experiences and then we then had very much for coaching...until you take the reins yourself you don't know what it's going to be like but I could see those things I had them as far as experience was concerned the other elements you can't do and you can't do until you're part of it can you, I did understand that I did know there was going to be stuff I can't do, I'm going to have just as good a go at it as everybody else is going to do, so a part of that was that preparation but I think because I went through such a terrible time as my first deputy and been so low and got to that person, the bottom where you think you're not going to get out of it and you think you shouldn't even be on the planet when you've done that and you've got out of it you don't feel...well it's a job at the end of the day I'm passionate about it, but it's a job and I never want to be down there again and if it got me to that point I'd do something else I'd give it up, it's not everything.

F: In my first Headship everyone kept telling me ...

C: They can't when I was there in a deputy position and didn't have anything left to give I couldn't ...

F: This woman is not following ...I couldn't do it, I couldn't park it, that was the advice from [names a local Headteacher] and the advice from [LA] it just consumes you doesn't it?

C: Yeah, but that was the importance for me for my opt into Headship was so high because ...opt into Headspace was so high because of those experiences and I knew that the emotional side of it was massive and everyone saying to me at work, they saw me yesterday "you're going to go to Headspace, you're not thinking about anything else, you're going to do all those things...stop" ...you know because they know me and I'd sort of go right.... But I'll come back and go right ok yeah, I've parked it, I've made it make sense and that is part of our self-care isn't it?

- A: *What about you B you've been quiet? Negativity about Headspace?*
- B: *I suppose the same as the others really, I suppose you just get here and think I'm never going to be able to do this, I'm not as good as everybody else they've done this, they've done that, they're going through this, they're coping with that, because I think initially we're all strangers aren't we so you don't open yourself as much as we do now.*
- A: *I'm an open book though I've said from day one I'm an open book. I said to everybody, listen I haven't got a clue here I'm struggling with this and I really need help because I don't have that...*
- F: *That girl from [names a school] frightened me...who was that [names a school] was it, she frightened me, I was like...*
- A: *...her Head had left, I went to her school it was lovely, beautiful school ...*
- F: *She's still there?*
- C: *She had a baby didn't she?*
- A: *Yeah she left the group.*
- B: *But I don't think there's anything negative, I felt like fortunate because I was seconded into the role I sort of had a chance to dabble, see if I liked it and if I didn't I could go back so I suppose I had that layer of protection, it's hard to come back isn't it once you've started something and you're on that journey it's hard to go back, in saying that with doing the teaching that I've been doing I've gone home and said I think I need to go back into the classroom, but I think there's so many positives been had, but since we've all sort of grown to the position and we've all grown together I think there's nothing negative about Headspace, I think the only negative is making sure that you can get here, when something comes into your diary and you can't make it, it's a long time before you see people that you know that you can be open and honest and say anything and it doesn't go out of this room.*
- C: *And I think that was what I said about the WATSAP suggestion is that that is immediately there when you are feeling that bit of gasp... it's there already isn't it.*
- A: *I think that works because we've already built trust, because I would never send anything, because once it's in writing it's there forever, and we teach children about this, about social*

media, I would never send a message out to anyone that could be shown to someone or used to incriminate me in any way as a professional but because everyone is trusted here, we're happy share that information between ourselves aren't we? Don't think it would have worked in the early days if we'd have set up a group WATSAP, I wouldn't have put anything on it I would have just not involved myself.

B: *And its having that staying power isn't it, because you try new things as a new Head and some things you think I'm not getting enough out of this but you try it again or try it for a year or whatever it may be and so if we've have had our year did [names LA] pay for two years? (All: yeah) if [names LA] after 2 years and we decided to go on our own and its well I'll go and see how it goes, it's that sort of thing to try, will it be different, how will it be, what will happen, and we lost a fare few people at that point didn't we? Which is fine because obviously that was there choice.*

A: *I think at that point it became a buy in situation didn't it, once it's down to you to make the decision that its valuable it's a financial buy in as well as a time buy in but if [names the LA] were paying for it it's a time buy in isn't it and you don't lose any money. I think for us in the early days when we were feeling guilty about coming it's the time but once it's a financial thing you've then got, not double guilt but you've got to way up how valuable is this to me financially, for my school given. our budget constraints is it valuable and that I think at that point like you say B was a watershed because people made a decision of financially it doesn't give me enough bang for my buck we're always making those decisions about training and I think because it's a coaching model there's very little tangible evidence that it's had any impact, how could you quantify the improved confidence, how could you quantify the fact that we've supported each other there's no way of me saying (C: it could have happened anyway) it's not quantified, that's like an interpretive thing, interpret the quality of it but you know like we say children's progress or the data or whatever there's no way of quantifying ...*

C: *You could do retention couldn't you? These people are actually still in Headship they haven't disappeared compared to who don't have Headship at Headspace.*

A: *Yeah which is why I was interested before when F was saying in her first Headship she didn't really have anything and so she left I wondered if she'd had something maybe it would have worked, what about you H, (I've forgotten what question we're onto) you said about negative but I guess we're onto the next*

one about is it stacked up to what you thought it would be, Headship is it what you thought?

H: *I don't know, I went into Headship to get out of the school that I was in, I was in a situation where I was a deputy in a big school so the next step would then be a Headship and I think I did go in with rose coloured glasses we all did really we thought oh we'd be able to put things into place, I walked in and I was straight into capability and parents and everything, you're just sort of thrown in so I didn't really have an idea of what it would be like.*

A: *Did everyone do NPQH (All: yeah) so we all did NPQH, and we were all deputies?*

H: *But it still doesn't prepare you until you're doing it because I think like, you know how we were saying, deputy no matter how much responsibility was given to you by your Head you still didn't have that accountability the same as we do now (F: judgements weren't against you in that way) and you always had somebody else you could pass it onto, whereas now it's, I've become in the last few weeks, the weather's my fault because of sports day, they're doing more to repairs up the road so that's my fault, you're just thinking where did all this extra stuff become my... so I don't think I had a clear idea of what Headship would be, it's grown and I've grown together with it really.*

A: *What do you think B?*

B: *The same really I suppose, one thing I did prefer was being the Head in an OFSTED because I felt in control of what was being said, whereas previously I was mopping up what had been said if you know what I mean, in my deputy role I had to do a lot of mopping up with the lead inspector but only with the bits that I found out or she'd come to me, I suppose when we were OFSTED I was in control of what was being said and I knew the story and I was prepared and fortunately it went well although we had to battle for it, so in a control freak point of you I suppose that was better, I preferred that, but it's all the underlying things isn't it, I suppose the situation that we've been in this year which everybody's been in previously with parents you know, you're not managing, school leadership is weak etc, is frustrating because you can't tell them what's going on and they can't have that full understanding and it's getting your Head around those sorts of things really, I think I've done the best I can with the situation and understandably they feel like that and have got a right to batter my door down, but I can't tell them.*

A: *I don't think anyone in your school has got a full understanding of everything that goes on other than you because staff sometimes don't understand what you do, parent's don't understand, the children sometimes... you can only share as much information as each stake holder is a. allowed to have and b. is appropriate to maintain that façade of your school really because if you told everyone everything there'd either be mass panic or there'd be a critical situation and I think that's one of the trickiest things, I think for me like you say, when parents suddenly attack you and say the leadership is rubbish you feel a personal attack on you because you are the accountable person but there's also a professional attack so if OFSTED are coming in you've got to battle so you're being professionally attacked if you're classed as coasting or whatever, you're personally attacked because often the parents will say rubbish stuff to you or like your staff might say rubbish stuff to you, so you've got like the personal attacks to you (B: or your governors) or a professional attack on you haven't you? And I think sometimes those 2 things are difficult to way up, given that you are the information holder for your entire school with very few people you can share that weight of responsibility as you are accountable, that's the key difference and I don't think you realise that when you're a deputy, I didn't, I was like you H, I was a non-class based deputy in a big successful, very leafy beautiful primary school where everybody literally loved me, the parents loved me I was happy skipping into work every day doing a cracking job, kids were learning it was great, so you think to yourself, actually I've done NPQH what's to stop me, what's to stop me now using the skills I've learned in my own school, because this is about succession isn't it, this is what you're basically planning to do, that's what you're expected to do you don't just be a deputy Head forever you do that role an assistant Head in preparation to become a Head, so you feel that you've practised loads of stuff with your Head either because they've given you the opportunity or because they're out doing strategic stuff and you're doing the day to day, but I don't think there's any way of preparing you for the multiple roles you have to play, because basically you're the safeguarding lead for the school, so all safeguarding stuff comes to you even in the past you've handled various things the accountability for the safety and the lives of the kids are suddenly yours, you're the safeguarding lead, (C: everybody's safety first) you know, safety first, you've got actual health and safety haven't you.*

C: *If I cant send my children back home to their parents... that weight it's like oh gosh, that change, its what's important in school, let's do this activity, lets sort all these different things out and put them in order of which is most important and it's just like, you know, the safety is there isn't it.*

- A: *Safety and safeguarding I think are two different things. In a day I think it's a health and safety job, I had to do legionella training, I thought that is surely something for somebody else, but it isn't, so legionnaires...*
- C: *The reason for that is that health and safety executive because there was legionnaire problems said all Headteachers have to do this but actually that was an obligation, I thought I'm not going to do that and then when I looked into it I have to.*
- A: *That is true but actually if you think about it though you should, when you actually think about the number of roles there are people with specialisms in that area, we're meant to know it, we're meant to know (all kinds) yeah, we're meant to know finances but there are people who spend years training to be accountants, but we're meant to know finances, we're meant to be man managers but there are people who have spent their whole career doing HR but we're meant to do it, education which we are trained in and obviously very good at otherwise we wouldn't be in our role so the only part of my job that I felt as a Head really skilled to do was to teach, because I thought we've been trained in that I spent 4 years in Uni and I have got 20 years of experience in teaching so I am qualified to do this but all the rest, I thought, crumbs, I haven't spent years doing accountancy and yet I've got a multi-million pound budget to sort out, I haven't got years doing HR but I have to manage peoples performance and expectations and morale and in addition to that, like Rachael says you feel like you've got to drive the school and everybody's got to come with you, this great drive towards improvement, which element of that were we actually trained for, I'm not a health and safety specialist I don't do risk assessments day in day out, we actually have one of those people as a governor and she thinks about the most random things because it's her job and she's trained, she goes all round the world and I think I'm meant to be as good as that.*
- C: *That was exactly the conversation I had with one of my senior leaders now and she said most of the time I'm a perfectionist, I said you're going to have to stop that then because you're planning to become an assistant Head, deputy and Head teacher, I said the sooner you realise you cannot do everything perfectly the more mentally well you are going to be and the less you are going to wind up everybody else, once you've got that you're fine but if you're preparing to do everything to the level of perfection that we're expecting ourselves to do because we are the hardest task master of ourselves then you're not going to do it so that was a really important lesson. I think the point where you kind of go well that's ok that that's not as good as I wanted it to be but I'm going to let that go but how deep*

would you have to do this bit and I think it's when you get caught with other things that you think if you could have done that's when you get pissed off because that's when I go shit, I know I wanted to do a better job but actually I couldn't do because at that time on my to do list I had this, this and this and forgive myself and give myself that space, I couldn't do that at that point and that's ok. It probably is that bit of massive learning curve.

B: *It's that you can't be all things to all people (H: Absolutely right) (A: Yeah and it's that that crushes you) over the years thinking back to when we were first here if parents attacked you or governors did or whatever it was just the end of the world and maybe I shouldn't be doing this, maybe I can't do this and then 4 or 5 years down the line thinking well you know what, I know it's been quite a year but I've done the very best I can with what I've got and actually it's when things don't go right that your leadership is the strongest, but people don't always see that they don't know the consequences behind it and that's just a frustration.*

A: *I think you're right, this week, I was laughing before with C, I got a penis and vagina gate, and on Wednesday I had a meeting with our union rep and he supported me through the meeting and my chair of governors was there and the parents and the parents basically said I should have my children removed from me and that I was a pervert to teach children about this vile language, penis and vagina, and that I should be locked up and it was just vial on and on and on an hour and half it took this utter drivel coming out and honestly I could feel myself... and I played it ok and at the end they left and I was really tired because I hadn't slept for a week panicking, you know, death threats and all kinds of stuff and Simon said "you handled that really, really well" and I said to him, I just laughed and I said "it doesn't feel like that right now [names the union rep], it does not feel like that right now" and I started to cry and I'm very tired today, it's the end of a long year successful busy challenging wonderful year but I'm really tired today and I've just spent an hour and half listening to how rubbish I am and how those children will go to a better school with a better Head and I feel really crushed because up until last week the amount of work we've done on that family and the amount of help and time that I've given them in the past has counted for nothing, because that parent has just made me feel this big [indicates with fingers a cm]. And then he asked my chair of governors what do you do, my chair of governors said, coz I was crying so it was a chance for me to calm down, so he said what do you do, he said oh I'm a geologist I do work for gas and oil companies, I said "he works with rocks, I'm tempted to retrain you know because rocks don't bite back" and [union rep] said*

to my chair of governors “she will not retrain she is one of our brightest and our best Headteachers in this authority” and my chair of governors said “so we are told” and I smiled to myself, I’d dried my eyes at this point, he didn’t mean anything horrible about it, he didn’t mean anything nasty, so I made myself a cup of tea, I said “thanks for your help guys” and went into my office and I thought I feel about a cm big, because the weight of all of that whole thing was over me for over a week, we’ve just had an hour and half of me being told I was really rubbish and in the past I might have been crushed, for days, and not pick myself up and all I did, I was too tired to speak on Wednesday so I just wandered round the school like a ghost chatted smiling, faking it out like you do, I was that tired I could barely drag myself through the day honestly, I got home then had to do and do a presentation at the University all about this research, and I burst into tears, someone was nice to me, and I burst into tears and I said “I’ve got to do this presentation don’t speak to me” pulled myself together did the presentation drove home and went to bed, and the same yesterday I was exhausted just floated through the school and today I’ve struggled to get out of bed, but today coming here I think well, it’s only one parent you know we’ve all had parents this week haven’t we, you’ve had parents kicking off about water, yours was about you’ve been a crap leader all year because of this situation, literally if we went round and said anything, but it’s coming here to put that into perspective because I didn’t get the perspective that I needed on Wednesday, even Wednesday night with all my colleagues who think I’m cracking at the Uni who were like why don’t you do this, do that, I just didn’t get that reassurance, that building back up that I needed Wednesday because that’s my day job, that’s the job I want to do well and I just felt like I’d failed.

F: *That’s not Headship is it, that’s not what it’s meant to be (all: no)*

C&H: *But it is what it is...*

A: *Yeah, and I feel a lot better this morning, I feel lighter, I feel quite perky now, whereas, I have not felt like that at least for 2 ½ days.*

B: *When we had these questionnaires come back in, there was a comment on there about me personally, think what it says now, [names herself] maybe the school is too small for her so she’s not able, oh it doesn’t give her the challenge that she needs, allows her to grow so maybe she’s not got 100% focus on the school, and you can’t get more personal than that (F: what’s that mean, what does that mean?) (A: bugger off) someone thinks I’m crap or that someone is very nicely trying to say they don’t think you’re doing the best for the school and others were*

quite general comments and when we were chatting about it we found at some point, I can't remember the context of the conversation but within that leadership isn't just about me guys it's about you as well it's about how governors have supported this but then really there is only the chair who has the full story ...

A: *What do you think the purpose of parent questionnaires even are?*

B: *At some point my chair of governors said, but they have got a point. I chose to ignore it (A: do you feel great) and I don't think she meant it that way (A: it doesn't matter) it hasn't been very good for that year group and we've done the best we can (F: how are we not having nervous breakdowns) (A: so this is my point then) you come here and you think well you lot understand that actually you've done the best you can.*

A: *I would like to digress slightly because I do want to talk about what you've said about this as an ability how've we not jibbed it and how have we not had a nervous breakdown, I will come back to that, but I am intrigued about this now because you've raised this whole questionnaire thing, I often think what is the purpose of the questionnaire, is there a purpose?*

F: *Yeah well I've done a questionnaire the last couple of weeks and for me the purpose is to know what my parents see as the real strengths of the school what are they very proud of and what do they think, very generically, are the next steps...*

H: *So what do... do you get that though, what do you get?*

F: *I got a bit, there was a couple of bits, comments, I didn't get any personal comments, my questions were there was the generic parent view one, my child is happy at school etc, and I just gave them yes, no, don't know and then underneath, this is the most important bit for me, I put what do you feel are the strengths of this school and then in the last 12 months what do you think has been progressed well and that's for me, does it tie in with my SDP, its validation for me isn't it?*

A: *Do those questions tie in with the OFSTED questionnaire though?*

F: *The first ones do, the tick but the ones on the bottom I'm not bothered.*

A: *This is what I'm interested in finding out, what is the purpose of the parent questionnaire because the OFSTED one is not... like what you're doing it feels like its authentic because you're*

actually asking what do you actually think, its authentic isn't it, what's the purpose of the one we're judged on?

C: It's to see if there's a pattern, they expect a certain % they expect it, ok you've got these comments its normal stuff you've not got any concerns about your parents and stuff, whereas if you had 70% of them coming in and going I've got these issues, there's bullying you're always going to have 1, you have 2, you have 3 you have that amount but you're not going to have (inaudible) and I don't know how to do it to be fair, that's the customer.

F: They're opening lines of enquiry aren't they, that's what OFSTED are doing...

A: That's interesting C, C said customer.

C: They are, it's a service (F: No its not) and it's an outcome the education of the child (F: they're not customers, they're individuals) absolutely, it's talking about the reality verses what we would like to see.

F: So do I get away with it because I'm a small school and I can be more personalised. I don't know?

C: I don't want to get bigger than single form entry for my school, I really don't, and as much as I can I get to know parents and the parents that I really, really moaned at are the ones that are really troubled because I spend a lot of time with them and my challenge is to get to know other people because those ones that aren't bobbing around and need me more they stay away and you kind of trying to engage with those, that's why normally we're outside and discussing and spotting someone you've never spotted before, because we've got 120 families and extended families. You know I felt terrible because the little boy without the home, we didn't know he hadn't got a home, we didn't know he was sleeping on somebody else's floor, we didn't know that that had happened, he wasn't one of our children that drains us, we always do a home visit so that would have flagged, so what we say now is change of policy we do a home visit with everybody (what so if someone joins you in year) yeah, (A: even if they're in year 6) we should do shouldn't we... who are we, part of our policy is we come out have a chat (F: isn't that invasive) well exactly (you can only go if they allow you to) if they turn around and say no we say it's our school policy to do that, so that enables you to start asking questions, if someone says no red flag, what's that about, we do need to... and we're in such a vulnerable area, it's not like we're middle class where you kind of go different issues but it's not about home, whereas ours are in shitty homes.

- B: *We do home visits for reception, the new intake or nursery visits, the nursery visits a lot of people will opt for the nursery visit that's really interesting because then you know the family well, you get what background from the nurseries.*
- C: *We always go to the nursery's we always go to all the homes but we didn't do with this little boy in reception and now he's turned round and said, I'm fine, I'm fine, you can't... because he's been stepped down from social care twice here and once in London but he's now saying I don't want you to know anything, so where can I go, because I can't say well actually the child is... well I am aware of the child, he's still saying to me he's sleeping on somebody else's floor, but I'm saying I need you to come in I need you to meet up with me every week so then I can do something about it, but he's said no thank you I'm ok now and social services say yeah he's fine doing what he's doing. But to me he's not is he?*
- F: *How much do we know is going on in that house, we don't.*
- C: *Or in his car or wherever he's choosing to keep his little boy, he's my little boy, nobody wants to help me, nobody wants to find me a house (F: how did you find out he was sleeping in a car?) he came and told us, he wasn't going to be able to come in because at the moment he was sleeping in a car.*
- A: *Next question, what makes Headship/leadership sustainable, what do you think?*
- F: *Rest, yes absolutely, switching off! I find that so hard switching off, it's so hard, can't do that, my brain is always thinking and I'm always on hand.*
- C: *What I mean is not thinking of school, I can quite easily not think about school for the weekend and then go back in and right ok I'm ready again, yeah (A: were you always like that?) no, (F: Last Saturday night I was watching a film and I was sending emails to governors) I was awful but I had to get to the low and go oh I'm about to lose everything here to put that into perspective because I know I'd been obsessing for years ...*
- B: *when you find yourself in that position when you think this is serious impact on my life and my health (C: relationships) it's time to stop then actually you do sort of come back and think, you know what this weekend I'm not doing any of it, and you don't feel guilty about it.*
- C: *Oh no, I don't feel guilty about not doing any work.*

- B: *I don't but then when I need to do it, I'll do it.*
- C: *I'm annoyed that I've still got things to do, but then I've always got things to do.*
- A: *When you think about it, when we started here everyone was feeling guilty about even coming out for the morning to do Headspace and now you're saying I don't even feel guilty about not working on the weekend, in 4 or 5 years that's a massive transition.*
- B: *I still feel guilty have a Headspace afternoon off school.*
- A: *Because it's during the working day as opposed on the weekend you feel like that's the weekend I'm entitled to the weekend.*
- B: *Yeah that's mine I can have to refresh myself.*
- C: *Yeah well that's that whole idea of I really should be somewhere, I really should be doing something because all my other staff don't have that.*
- A: *All my staff have half a day's PPA, so what do you have?*
- C: *But you're not doing PPA in that time are you?*
- A: *It depends what you think about your planning, your planning isn't planning for a lesson the next day or next week, your planning is thinking about next year, thinking about staff the strategic planning is different it's not, you know you couldn't chat to a colleague in your work about strategic planning, you can if you're a teacher, my teachers often plan together, so they sit and do the PPA together or I let them do it at home but if they're doing it together it's because they're planning together for the following week on various topics. But if you were doing your PPA what would it look like (C: rest and relaxation in order to be able to do the job better) that's the thing so is that any less valuable?*
- C: *Well no but it's perception on how it's used.*
- A: *Because if feel like if we're talking about the questionnaires, somebody once said, well she's never in school and the questionnaire had gone out on the back of two weeks when I'd been here, there and everywhere and what they'd failed to see was that I was out trying to raise money because we were about to lose staff and every time I went out to do this particular role money comes into our school, so it's like I'm going to earn lots of money and then we can keep this member of staff,*

but no one outside knows that, they just think he car's not there so she mustn't be here.

B: *Which is just the same as you've been rubbish this year because of this, this and this.*

A: *Do you know what I think now, I think well they don't know the truth do they and what I feel like you said is I know in my heart I couldn't have done a better job than I've done, I couldn't have done a better job, because I've tried to keep every plate spinning and I've managed and here we are with one week left to go and (still smiling) right, I've done it!*

C: *What amazed me when I discussed with you this morning you said you dragged yourself in, I was thinking the amount of people that wouldn't have been able to get up out of bed, that's the point where I'm going to say I'm stressed I can't do this anymore, your resilience as far as that is concerning is absolutely stunning, you know? To fight through that and say I'm going to keep doing it but it's also balancing out upon actually having gone through that, should be stopping at home, you know? Maybe tomorrow morning, had that terrible meeting, do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to look at my diary and stay at home all morning and I'll be coming in at 12, do you know what tomorrow morning I'm going to spend time doing something else and I'll have a work at home day because to put that smile on and that stretch emotionally and mentally straining.*

A: *I did it because I was coming here, and you know what I just thought I'll keep on going I've said it before, can't remember now, but I know everyone thinks I'm a bit mad marathon running, but I've done 2 now and I can honestly say you get to the last couple of miles and literally your brain is telling you just pack it in, what are you doing, your toe nails may be hanging off your knackered, pack it in, just go to the first aid and it will all be over. I had in April this conversation and then I was saying, just run to the next balloon, just run to the Macmillan stand, just run to Big Ben, and in my mind now whenever it's rubbish like this week I just think, just remember what you were like when you hit Big Ben A, you can do it. You **can** do this because you think you can't, you can, just get to Friday, just get to Monday afternoon, just get to the year 6 production, just get to... and so for me I just calmly put everything into that analogy, everyone probably has their own analogy don't they but for me I remember what it felt like to be hanging out of my arse after running 26 miles thinking I can't do the last little bit there's the finish but I'm just going to give up and you don't because you think don't be daft, come on and I feel like that in school, I really do.*

C: *Mine is going back to the depression and going seriously that could... ok I got through that, I fought my way out of that, it's like survival, but when you were talking about the questionnaires and things and staff questionnaires because they can come back pretty shitty as well, and I sent mine out and it came back, it was the OFSTED questionnaire and leadership, which they said was rubbish, and I thought right ok let's just go through and I'll break down the questions and say right, this is the question, this is leadership and next to the question it was type of leadership, this is the question and then they scored it, so they scored it on... and so everything was coming out lovely and really strong, so they'd got a problem and the problem at the time was they were getting enough thank yous so... but unless I can find out what their thinking in their Head which really is hard to listen to, you have to put your big jacket on and go out and have a look, what is it that their seeing and it can be ok well I can understand that it's that person, bloody hell she's just walked out the door yesterday, she's gone and I know it's her, that's that gone and I can't do anything about that, but what about other people who are thinking those things and its getting into your whatsit windows whatever it's called (A: Johari) Johari window (A: did I share that with you?) no its one that I've always done, but you've got your windows what you know about yourself or what everybody knows, what you know about yourself and what nobody else knows (F: let's do that in the new term of Headspace).*

A: *I'll do it in the first term I'm happy to, I did it in my coaching module.*

C: *Your 4th window is everybody else knows about you but you don't know (oh we did that with J didn't we?) yes and the whole idea is you want that window to be as small as possible, so how you going to know what everybody else is thinking about you, but you want that to be as small as possible to be effective don't you.*

A: *You'd be surprised and it's interesting and there's also a negative one to it, so the Johari windows got really positive attributes there's also a reverse one of that as well, don't know whether you've seen that one, let's do it next year. Is that sustainable leadership though? Is it sustainable having rest and having times out like now?*

C: *What makes it sustainable... that's a big aspect of it, to me I think it's what everybody has done, you've built a team of people, you go in by yourself and now like yesterday I was like having loads of texts and suddenly, because one of my key things is the nurture aspect of it, and that doesn't mean that*

you let people get away with stuff and that could be your tuff love isn't it, but that people were asking for the first time really I'm worried about you, it was like sugar, come on, you know that support is coming back, because you've built your team you've got your right hand, your left hand and they understand that's what they are and that's really important to, you do know that your honest you do know... and sometimes it's really hard to have those dialogs with people, you can't when you don't know them because they're not your right and your left you haven't got that trust system and I think that makes it long term so either you've got that and you can stay or like you say actually my right arms gone, sugar I need to be perhaps going so that they can build that up again and I can go somewhere else and build that up and make those starts.

A: *Team building? sustainable leadership is it about building a team?*

H: *I think building a team, well I don't have a team.*

B: *Shifting sands with teams isn't it, you get them where you want them to be, you get your governing body where you want them to be (C they bloody leave) somebody goes and somebody comes in and it's the same with your staff, it's shifting sands I find with building teams, because it takes time for people to get to know each other really doesn't it?*

A: *Is that part of sustainable leadership you know how we said earlier you bring people on and you train them and then they fly don't they because you've done a good job with them, you've nurtured them trained them, they've had all this experience now I'm going off for the next... is that what sustainable leadership is? What is it? I've been pondering this, been pondering it all week.*

C: *Is it being able to sustain your own leadership (don't know) because you're creating leadership system within a school that in effect is taken on board and then someone else takes that.*

A: *Is it a system, is that what it is? Is it building a team or is it building a system that you being able to sustain yourself that you can lead and not fall to pieces?*

B: *When I went and did that stint at [names a local school] I knew that I had somebody in my team who could step up and make those decisions and run that school for the 3 days I wasn't there, that had to be put in place and trained over a few years so then I was able to go and do that and she was able to do that and did it really, really well. So it enabled me to grow and it enabled her to grow and from that there may come something else.*

- C: *Do you know when you said you were thinking of going back into the classroom that you needed to go back into the classroom more, why did you say that?*
- B: *Because I loved it.*
- C: *It wasn't that I don't want to be a Head anymore?*
- B: *No, no, it was just great being with the children all morning and because I was in there every day I was seeing that day to day progress and that difference I was making to the children, but then as a teacher you can't do that for the school can you, if your Head is making decisions that's holding the school back you can get quite frustrated with that and think, for goodness sake you need to do this, this and this, but that's not your call is it, as a teacher.*
- C: *But it is as a leadership, a leadership team where you have that discussion and growing that leadership team so that they are having and understanding why people are behaving in a certain way, I think that's what's really important is when you talk about them going on and can research help, not just the research around Headspace but people understanding themselves and their own awareness is really important isn't it, so research around that is quite key to make sure that we do know why people make decisions because we're all different, you know when you have discussions with somebody and they go (aggressive display shouting) yeah that's because they're contemplating they're taking longer, she'll come back with something, but you've got to be able to listen to it.*
- B: *It is about empowering people, it is about empowering people and having trust in your team.*
- C: *I'll let them have a go at it and fail, and unfortunately when you're in-between a rock and a hard place that's really, really hard letting that happen because they've got to take hold of it, they've got to go for it, they've got to be able to be a risk taker and then you can't do that under I'll tell you to do this and this and this is what it looks like in this lesson, it's not about that is it, being a teacher, it's like you said, it's about knowing the children, it's about I know the families about spotting the faces look the same when she's just walked through the door, it's so much more than delivering a curriculum.*
- A: *You're quiet F.*
- F: *I don't know what sustainable leadership is really, I think it's an outlook and a can do attitude and you know I've had a wobble*

this week and actually it was completely ridiculous I know I wasn't thinking rationally but I was like I felt like I was on the start of a nervous breakdown like I was back where I was at [names previous school] and 24hrs later I was like what a silly thing to think, glad I didn't tell anyone.

A: *But you're telling us.*

F: *I'm telling you now because I'm not in that place at the moment, but I was in that place for a good 24-36hrs where I'm just like, do you what I can't do this job. I'll tell you what it was, do you know like it wasn't [names a teacher in her school] because things were settled, [names a teacher] my deputy was in a very woe is me, very negative place, he's had a really tough year with a tough class with loads of new children coming in, change in dimensions and a child with Asperger's with behaviour difficulties and he only ever wanted to do his best so he's like... anyway... I was like talking to him, and he was like, yeah ok we'll just live in Rachael's world of optimism shall we and walked off from me and I was like it's the mood hooverer, do you know and it really hoovered the mood, then we sent the reports out so a parent came to see me all in the space of about 10 min with a previous 2 reports from her previous school where she was above, above, above across the board and was effort A,A,A across the board and we were saying not at expected in writing and the parent was like, how is that, so when I read the reports in year 1 she couldn't spell high frequency words and didn't have capital letters and proper sentences, how is she above, that's not a child at above is it in the end of year 1, that's not a child of above, so I had to manage that and I had another parent... and it was just, none of these parents were kicking off they were all just raising questions (yeah which they should do) (I'm feeling confident enough to come and talk to you) yeah and you know the schools moving forward in the displays that we've got look really nice but there's other displays that are really shitty and we've got furniture everywhere because we've had a load of influx of furniture, new orders that haven't been put away, that stresses me out and I was just a bit like flat, do you know, all it took was Nathan to say that and walk off as if I was talking a completely fluent language, and all of a sudden the staff aren't with me and that was enough for me to do, do you know what I'm done with this, maybe I'm kidding myself and all the positives I talk about is actually just your view point and somebody else has a viewpoint that says yeah it's improved but it's still shit and I think that's where I was. Other days I can look at the SEF and say we're moving forwards and other days I look at it and think got we're not even good anymore and we were good last time.*

- A: *But I think everybody goes like that.*
- C: *It's a natural cycle. The time of the month or time of the year at the moment to say that you can still talk and clear things and discuss and whatever when you've actually got to a point where ...*
- F: *I think the sustainability side of it for me is time and processing time, I knew I was being irrational at that time and I was like... well let's just hang fire and get to Friday and then we'll take stock and see, and that's the bit I think that keeps me sustainable, and just one good night sleep and the next morning I can be "we're going to do this today, it's going to be ace" and I'm back (which is why your health is so important isn't it, because when you're sleep goes off) yeah it's you're mental health, it's you're physical health and you're mental health, and I knew, I was in the car and just I knew those thoughts weren't me and weren't accurate.*
- A: *And if you think back to the start of this I used to say what are you going to do for yourself between now and the next session and she made us consider what we were going to do outside of school for us and she made us tell it the next time and some people said oh well, I was going to try and go to the gym, I was going to try and get one day to pick up my child and she made us start to consider it.*
- F: *She remembered what each one of our things were, so that means you matter doesn't it?*
- A: *And each of us remembered each other's and do you remember us laughing with [names a Headteacher], and you were going to go home and revamp all your finances and we're talking like 4 years and I can still remember and no matter what nonsense has happened in my life or in school I just remember you said you were going to go home and revamp all your finances.*
- F: *Thinking back (inaudible) has got the potential to be negatives if we don't hold the code of Headspace dear and I was like, what would I do for myself, I'm going to take [names husband] to see Dunkirk, you know on a date night, and that night without the kids, (inaudible) he doesn't really like the cinema (but he's spending time with you) but I just thought cinema, different we just go out for meals and stuff but I just thought that's something that we probably haven't done, our first date was chicken run... and he married me, so I thought I'm going to do that, I was trying to think if I could fit it in before we go on holiday but I don't think we can.*

- C: *The thing that I remember is the money you spend on going out (F: oh still do) how many times a week.*
- A: *Somebody got a cleaner, who got a cleaner?*
- F: *That's me, she's there today, I still haven't had my oven cleaned, need to do that.*
- A: *Last question, given the fact that my research is all about the benefits, if there is any of Headspace, do you think it could be helpful to people to know about the benefits of Headspace, or not?*
- H: *I think it should be something that within the NPQH (F: do you?) I do, because it's so crucial, we all hear that a Head is a lonely job, and it is and you hear it on NPQH but you don't understand that actually (F: think it should become compulsory in your first 2 years of Headship) I do, and we're lucky for all I dislike [names LA] for different things but they do see the benefit and a lot of it is down to I she really (A: she advocated it didn't she) but I think it should be, Headship and this support for new Headteachers.*
- A: *Do you think just Headspace or any kind of program like a coaching program or do you think...*
- H: *I think Headspace is very different because you do your NPQH but Headspace as we say time and time again it's the only time when you walk through that door and you can be you as the Headteacher of the school and you can say things and not feel worried that it's going to go back or held against you because we're all in the same position but we're all in very different positions and I just think it's crucial. I sent a whatsapp the other day or the email, do we want to carry on next year and I dreaded the answer because I thought if they say no, what am I going to do (you look emotional) I was really.... And everybody said yes, everybody, categorically and some people came back and said yes for next year but I really can't do the Friday.*
- A: *What would we do if we didn't come here, how would we...*
- F: *I think I would probably try and set it up!*
- C: *I know that I was talking to a Head from [names a school] and that she was off this time or is going to leave (F: is that [names a Headteacher]) yeah, (A: leave what sorry) leave Headship, she's retiring and she was saying... I was talking about you know... and she said I had that and as people leave Headship because she's been in for a very long time and I was thinking as we get older we're going to have people...oh what happens*

when people go to another school or out of area go down south and I started thinking what have you got for just you [names a Headteacher, that was my thinking because she's going through not wanting to leave, she's been forced to leave because of the situation that she's in (is she) no because of anything to do with... but she said I'm not ready for this leaving I'm not ready for all of that, and it's really, really hard for her and nobody else is at the same stage of the game as her to be able to discuss that with, and I think that's really hard.

A: *I was thinking about if I got a job on the Wirral or whatever (H:you can travel) it's the same distance.*

F: *Can we keep going and have a retirement space?*

A: *Next year when we've all had enough!!!*

C: *My first sniff was you bringing up Headspace, I would never have got that from any of the other circles!*

A: *Was it you or was it me? We were going to academise?*

C: *It was you raising academisation and just the big machine that was going and it was you talking about.... There is such and such a meeting coming up and we went to that (the big meeting) and I was like ok if this is like ok if this is happening it's going to happen like that to my school because they're going to get me and that was then right I've got to move really fast then, I've got to get my chair of governors of the academy show, I've got to get all of this stuff happening because I'm realising that this is shifting really quick and we need to be making a decision where we're going not right you lot you're on that one.*

A: *That's exactly what I said ...*

C: *It's that whole kind of wooh! And then the discussions, there's people within the group that are getting together there was quite a lot around that and I think that was one of those things where we are sharing things straight up because we're interested in everybody.*

A: *Because we're looking out for each other, and you don't get many people looking out for each other do you?*

C: *But as far as is the research base, yes, because we're still committing to it and there's going to be tighter and tighter budgets, so it's like thank you very much for your report... I'm going to take that to whoever questions be about going to Headspace or not, worried about my professional development, there you are, I might not be lucky enough to have... the*

governors' system is changing anyway, they're becoming advisors they don't have the power that wields over there you know, it's just basically saying it should be us as professionals making those decisions in school, not the governors thinking they're the boss, they're not the boss and that's ridiculous but you know what anybody that asks I've got that to say yeah this is my day a term, this is the research base behind it in order for you to know that's what you want to continue happening that's what I'm going to continue to opt into, that's my evidence base. So as soon as your report is ready 2 open hands and I'll be storing it!

F: *It's really important as well though that new Heads coming in don't underestimate having that time to themselves because you take on this great responsibility and for me, my first Headship was like playing house, this is it I've made it, but it isn't it's just the start of the journey, so I had a very childish or naive view of what was going to be and I didn't know what Headspace was I was just I've got to go to this and not worthy of coming in and I remember I was sitting there and there was loads of tables and I was just like oh god what am I doing here, why am I doing this again.*

C: *Because you came in at the start in January I think that's what was different for you is that we'd all done the sit around the table.*

F: *Were you at the start? (C: yes) you were in September.*

H: *The lady from [names a place] she came in the January didn't she?*

A: *Do you know what else I think is pretty supportive and I think only you've done it, is the conference every year, and I know some people have got a view on it but I have found the links I have made at that conference have been very helpful not to the degree that this has been because this is 6 times a year regular drip, drip, drip. But that conference every year is a time when you can build relationships and network with other people and hear about what they're doing in a really relaxed way, do you know what I do when I go F, I train everyone thinks I'm a loon, I'm in the gym or in the pool, they're all like yeah lets go out, we'll go for a walk, I'm like see you later, I'm on my own swimming, talk about time for yourself, talk about Headspace it's in the lake district, it's beautiful and I train swim, swim, swim have a cup of tea and I might read something about school and I make it about education but it's not about Which is the day job it's about, I sit and think what can I do, what can I do next year and every time you go you hear someone who speaks and you think, 3 years ago I went and I thought oh that's interesting,*

a throw away comment this guy made in his key note speech ... CPD ...and it was only because I had the time to think and I sat thinking when everybody had gone out drinking, I sat and looked at the lake and thought CPD I wonder what that is, you know we do loads of CPD, googled it, researched it and whilst I was there I decided we were going to do it, I'd already started to fill in the paper work before I'd got back to school, we got this gold CPD award. If I hadn't have gone there I never would have heard about it, I wouldn't have had the 5 minutes in the day to download the forms and complete them and think about it whether we would even get it, is it worth the time invested, every year have been something, at least one thing I've thought, that's a really good idea and along the way forged friendships and relationships with people that I could contact as well as you guys for various things, I wouldn't say I'd share like we share but I would definitely contact them and just pick up the phone, do you know one of those people is an OFSTED inspector and she's recently done pupil premium review training, now we are due our pupil premium review on Tuesday, so I rang her the other week and said hi how are you blah blah, would never have the confidence to just ring someone cold and say listen I could really do with your paper work any chance of you sending it over, she sent it over to me, not a problem, she sent it across and I've had a chance to look through what I'm going to be grilled on, on Tuesday because of a relationship I made at that conference and I think again is it quantifiable what you get from a conference, can you quantify the benefits, how could you quantify that you've made a relationship with someone and that you've got this confidence to go into a meeting, its all day Tuesday, the last week of the term, the last week of the year I'm going to be grilled on pupil premium (nasty, whose coming to do that) [names an inspector] she's an OFSTED inspector, she's inspected a couple of schools in this authority actually, so I've got her in to just give me a grilling, I'd rather she does it, and I'm paying for it rather than OFSTED to do it come March. But what I'm saying is, in terms of another layer of support for everyone, I think you came once didn't you? (B: I came once).

C: *And you did used to say how invaluable it was (B: it was) your budget linked aren't you? And mines always about budget linked, you should enter via leadership and then don't feel I can do both, although [names a Headteacher] from [names a school] he goes to that one, he goes to his focus one, he goes to leadership one, but he does the same thing and it's like me really stopping and thinking strategically, and you do, you use your time really well.*

A: *You know that 'The art of being brilliant'? I had no time to read it and then I went to the conference and thought, I'll just read*

that (F:have you bought your children the teenage one? The art of being a brilliant teenager) No.

C: Because [names daughter] was saying "I'm not making the most of things, but I really feel that I" she said "how can I" because again she can be down at the ?? and there was something else she was talking about, oh she didn't do the university thing that quite a lot of the children her age have gone and had this experience through the holidays and she said "I haven't done that, I didn't grab that, but how do I motivate myself to do that" and I said why don't you read your art being brilliant book, that might help you a bit, "I've read it from cover to cover" she said, yeah well maybe just having a little look at that now that you're feeling like this maybe that's another revisit, because I do think stuff like that is just so good it does stop you and make you think...

A: So I think we should all go on it next year and just, what were you going to say B?

B: I was just going to say as far as the research in helping other people if your research, which I'm sure it will, reflects our journey which we've talked about of the last 4 years then that in itself I think will help people, because we talk quite a lot about the problems we have with governors and parents and all these things I wasn't expecting to have to deal with at such a degree when I was a new Head, but if new Heads read that research and can expect those things, at least they've been given a Heads up.

A: On Wednesday I had to basically explain what I was doing to lots of people and I did it, but one of the things that made me nervous is doctoral research is meant to be completely new, your meant to provide something new into the market place and you do have a crisis of confidence because you think I'm just me doing my little old day job what can I offer new to the market place of Headship and leadership, what can I offer that's new, that's never been done before no-one's ever considered it, actually that's what I'm interested to know could this actually be valuable to anybody else other than us, and when I shared it with one of my colleagues, not my supervisors, but one of my colleagues he said, this is meant to interest people, who could it interest, I was like, I don't know, other people doing their job? I don't know, He was just like, are you for real this could inform how people support new Head teachers in the future if you do it properly and you do it with quality, which I'm sure will, this could inform how we help the Headteachers of the future and I was like oh, didn't think about that, because you don't think big do you?

- B: *It will reflect our journey wont it, the ups and downs (A: you've all got to read it you know).*
- F: *Can't wait to read it, when will it be done?*
- A: *Soon...*
- H: *We've all done NPQH but actually nothing that I learnt on NPQH prepared me to be a Head. **At all. At all.** It was just something we had to do, it gave me the skills to be able to interact with people that I didn't know because I'm not good at that. But actually as the role of Head teacher, when we did that day when we had those scenarios, (All: oh yes) they were nothing (F: no development points. How can you come out of NPQH with no development points) but they weren't real were they? They weren't based on what we had to deal with.*
- A: *Funny enough I'd forgotten about all of that until you just mentioned the scenarios and when I look back I could laugh because nothing could prepare you for someone screaming in your face [All: absolutely, yes!!!] and their spittle is actually landing on you and your there shaking because they're screaming at you, nothing can prepare you for that because nobody would do that in a scenario...*
- C: *I had the one where a gentleman and he was refusing to do action plans, refusing to do whatever, and then the feedback, autocratic, I'm autocratic, I don't think I'm autocratic, going back to my Head going do you think I'm autocratic? She went no, oh right, so obviously I was under those circumstances? but it was like, fine well we'll do this together then because we are going to do it, yeah you just felt that they were being really pushed.*
- A: *There's nothing in the training though is there, when you think about it.*
- H: *But you know, you were saying your research, this is the reality of being a Head, your research everything that we've spoken about and put into (F: how awful; it is at times, that pressure) your report that's life you know, that is our day to day life, you get up in the morning, well the minute you wake up at 3o'clock in the morning whatever your brain clicks in.*

Appendix B

Headspace Interview 12/05/2017 # 1

Duration: 9:09

Headspace Program

- A: *Ok ladies so you both in some way facilitate the headspace program for [names the LA] **new** Head Teachers and we've chatted quickly about the value that I see in the program and I wondered if you could sort of expand upon some of the points that I made and chat about what you see as valuable to the Headteachers that you work with.*
- K: *I think for me it's about a space, Headspace says it, it's in the name really, it's a space where you can come together and create a group which is safe, where they can talk about things that impact on them as people, where the content of the, or the focus of the sessions is not Headteacher business, as they go to plenty of business meetings, where they don't need to present things that are **not** how they are, so they can just be themselves and that other people can be there to support and help them through issues so it's about engaging with issues in terms of how it impacts on the individual as well as how it impacts professionally and the process, over the, in this case over two years, for me is about building that trust within the group so that people are there they now their role with each other, they know there are people there for them and that it can almost provide a professional and personal kind of underpinning to help to thrive in the job.*
- A: *Ok.*
- J: *And I think from the two different words that I was going to say are the two different levels that it gives the newly appointed Headteachers on a personal and a professional level, and for me what's really tough for new Heads coming in is they haven't got the time or the space, time for reflection that really is necessary in order to have a sustained and successful career. The pace that new Heads have to act on is unrealistic really and what Headspace does is give them individually, and personally, time to reflect on how they are as a person and how they are as a leader, its that reflective practice that learning which is underpinned by research that K brings in, by experiences themselves, by sharing ideas and other alternatives which helps them understand themselves as Heads as leaders and as people. Professionally it helps and impacts on how well the school is, well being and personal wellbeing, we talked about institutional wellbeing, we talked about that today about resilience, so it's also making sure that life back at school is good professionally. The other thing that it does is that in a context of school where they are competing against each other it builds up collaboration, for some of the groups that have been meeting before and continue to meet*

they are working together on key issues that affect not just them but their children and families.

A: *We had a conversation this morning about competition and about the structure of Ofsted and the judgements given don't necessary affect your reputation but they do affect the competition that goes on between Heads, particularly if you are in geographically close proximity and I think you're right this has really helped us to collaborate because the people who are still left now, there is no sense of competition with each other or to try and outdo or outshine each other, I'm not saying that happens but there's no sense of that at all, there's just a sense of collaboration and support that I don't think would have been there had we not had our group, not had Headspace.*

J: *One of the groups for example is having a shared inset day they're bringing by [names an educational advisor] it's or the whole staff so their building on that collaboration to impact on children's learning.*

A: *And each group have taken it in a different direction?*

J: *It depends on the personalities of the group and that's what's so good about the process, it enables people to be nurtured but to grow in the direction that they want to grow, the process is similar but the way in which it is interpreted or how people move it forward depends on their motivations, values and moral purpose and interests, that's why the model is quite standard and it is that standardised process and it's very similar but it's had to adapt to meet the needs of the group.*

A: *So is it a one-year model or a two-year model now? Because we started it with one didn't we but then your predecessor made it into two, so is it always two now?*

J: *That's how it has been, I don't know whether there is an assumption on the part of the Heads but there has been an assumption, an implicit assumption that it's going to be a two year journey that we're on together, although within that kind of, you know we'll have to go a year at a time. I know you're interested particularly in this authority but I've got a group in another authority which is going into its sixth year and I still work with them, so it's not a time limited process in a way, it's about a journey which starts when the Heads all come together and then they travel with some sort of togetherness but each doing their own thing and meeting up half a dozen times in the year to share their experiences of the journey.*

A: *And that idea of collaboration and support once you've built on it to start with, what we were saying was the very early foundations were about confidentiality and having the ability to share in reality what you really feel, whether it's reality outside how other people perceive it, it's your reality isn't it? If you're feeling threatened, anxious, upset or worried about something, there might be no need in the real world but in your world there is every need, so if you've got that support network established in the early days through the formal program, if you like, then*

- there is more likely you have the sustainability of that when you no longer have the scaffold of the formal program.*
- K: *I think that's how the local authority look at it, because their role is diminishing they need to ensure there is a self-sufficiency in Headteachers because there isn't anybody to go to in the local authority now so really it's about developing those networks and those approaches, the local authority also see it as an investment in leadership an investment in people.*
- A: *And is that where they come from in kind of funding?*
- K: *School improvement, it comes from the school improvement budget because it is that investing in people in order to support the children, it's about how they see it, it's about their moral purpose in what they do and they really do believe that people matter, it's not just about systems or structures about investing in people.*
- A: *And is that because people like you who have been a Headteacher and understand the pressures and sort of discuss the importance of it how does the importance of this come?*
- K: *It comes from their experiences and within [names the LA] we've still got a family of schools it's very unusual in a sense not many have become academies there is that sense of a family of schools in the local authority and they've given lots of autonomy to schools but they've been mindful of us to try and build up the capacity within the system to improve itself like the ASIAs.*
- A: *So how did this program come to the local authority, was it something you market J?*
- J: *I don't do the marketing, I don't know how... [names a colleague] is the person in charge of that, but it may well be the organisation, it's changed its name now, it used to be [names the previous organisation], but it may well have contacted the authority in the first instance.*
- A: *So work life support was the original?*
- K: *We used to do a lot in the authority about work life support, work life balance, we did lots of networking and audit tools, we had people coming in and did about five, maybe even ten years ago, I think it's something that's stuck with I, but I genuinely don't know how it started*
- A: *It would be interesting to know where it all...you know its inception, because to me it feels like its evolved into a peer mentoring, peer coaching group so each of us at some time will bring a problem and although we know the answer its having it reflected back to us, so that's where it has evolved whether that's where it started off as. [Shrugs].*

Recording ended and resumed when I joined the conversation.

Headspace meeting 12/05/2017 #2

Duration 17:51

A: *So the first group was?*

- I: *Small school Heads, and there were a couple of people in there who were very experienced heads and who didn't really feel that they would benefit (A: Because they had experience?) because they had experience, and they were experienced Heads.*
- A: *And the rationale for small school Heads?*
- I: *That's the way it was set up when I took over, no idea, that was the first and then of course it couldn't continue because we'd done the first model, we looked at the possibility of doing new Heads in the group.*
- A: *And are you the person who sourced J's company?*
- I: *It was done the year before through [names ex-colleagues], they did it through Workforce, yeah, and it worked well, but then we thought it was so good but it wouldn't work again for small schools because it would be the same people... (K: yeah the same people) I felt it wasn't enough for new Heads, so then I approached the local authority and said I think this is needed, apart from a lot of other Heads who would benefit but the rationale behind it was to give support when there was no support for new Heads apart from what [names the LA] offered, and that's when [names the LA] became involved in it really, the second year they funded four out of six meetings, yeah, that's right and then we covered the two meetings that weren't covered the rationale was for new Head support. Out of the first group I never had anybody who didn't come, that said sorry I'm not coming anymore. Attendance was hit and miss but nobody actually pulled out from that time onwards, some people attendance was very hit and miss but nobody said, no I'm not coming. We had a couple who thought it wasn't for them, actually when they came they thought it would be a bit too touchy feely (A: and did they say that to you as well?) indirectly yeah, and I said fine, they weren't sure and I did ask somebody who knew them well and I said well let them come along that's fine, but actually the person that particularly said that, came every meeting so they stuck with it. So we didn't actually have any of the groups say they're not coming back, we had a couple that didn't want to be involved from the start (A: but once they came they invested in it as a thing of value?). Yeah, that's it, when we had the academies, free schools, University free school and they said it was them because they did that premises or anything and then they subsequently didn't engage with [names the LA] either, but we didn't have anybody say we're not coming back, obviously some people's attendance was better than others, some would have prioritised it to the point where they'd have to be dragged back in but we didn't have anyone sort of refusing, and you had one did you?*
- K: *We had [names a colleague] last year, just remembered, this group from the [names a local high school] as well, we also had one who is an acting head and I think I persuaded her a bit too much to come and maybe it wasn't for her and she's gone back*

into the classroom and can't get the time out and we've got one who's Head's come back and she's gone back into the classroom and it just seems to be residential left right and centre but she wants to continue but hasn't attended.

I: Yeah, fair enough, I think we had one who was acting and went back into the classroom, did come to one more and couldn't continue but that's not because they didn't want to engage it wasn't practical for the Head to say you can go. The original one we set up, there were two, two that should have come and didn't want to engage at all from the start and I always said it was interesting because they were the two that didn't last the year (A&K: as heads?) yeah.

A: That's what I'm interested in because we've all discussed that it's helped us to build resilience and it's helped us to build a knowledge base, so for example today we were discussing a HR situation in one of our schools, I won't say which one, but because we've all had experience over the four years of HR issues we've got a knowledge base over the four years where we can sort of sign post each other and sort of advise each other and offer support to each other which we wouldn't have had had we not met together because there aren't many opportunities when you go for staff training, Headteacher training to share those skills or that expertise.

I: And I think the other thing is because it's a confidential group in some cases it's your near neighbour but in some cases it isn't, it's good to have somebody who's not on your doorstep as well.

A: Which is exactly again what I said earlier because it reduces the competition doesn't it?

I: It does, we used to have a big network, the [names the network] which had 30 odd members' years ago and one of my best friends was a Head in [names the LA] it was lovely, if you have links I don't want to tell [names an area], I want to talk about it outside, it was lovely to have that, and this gives you that opportunity.

A: That's what we think.

J: There was a couple of other things that occurred to me when K was talking, one of them is the idea of establishing good practices in self-care right from the beginning, which is one of the reasons I always do, what I'm going to do for my support group between now and next time? Because in my experience and K and I'm sure K will concur, is that Heads are actually really, really poor at looking after themselves and a. it sets a good example to the rest of the staff and b. it is absolutely imperative for them that they set off looking after themselves, otherwise they just won't survive, and the other thing that occurred to me was the thing of ideas and information and knowledge, there's also the opportunity to gently challenge each other and sometimes some people can get stuck into a way of thinking about things and it's just sometimes you have an insightful comment or a question from somebody else can

just shift things enough for them to see a way through so that coaching model is really important as well, it's not about giving advice it's about helping people see a way through just a little bit of clear space so they can move forward.

I: You know the [names a national educational speaker] critical friend is actually asking questions to make you stop and think not to give you solutions people chip in and say have you thought about this, it's actually to think about why is it important, is it the most important thing or am I fixing onto something but actually something else is masking that.

A: I think it's easier to... when you're the person in the middle of everything going on in a situation that sometimes you can be paralysed and your brain doesn't work, metaphorically your brain doesn't work properly and you lack clarity and you bring your problem to people you trust and say this is it and like you say...

J: I think putting something out actually takes away some of the pressure, as soon as it's out you can look at it differently so it is about perception a lot of it.

A: But like you say who are you going to share it with, you can't necessary share it with people in your vicinity you certainly can't share it with your staff, so who do you share it with?

K: It's about friendship and camaraderie as well and it's not saying lifelong friends but you have got a friend or critical friend who you can contact, because it's quite lonely as a Head [I: it's very lonely] and you can't always turn to staff, so it's having that somebody out there that, I'll give them a quick call or meet for coffee just sometimes when you're low or something's troubling you just to have that knowledge that somebody is a safety net there.

A: So have you faced anybody that, obviously you are the guys that asked for the funding in whatever official way that you do it, have you faced any kind of adversity trying to get funding for this program?

I: The first year was done the second year we went to [names the LA], the local authority we did a review, we wanted to get the second year in and I asked for people's feedback (A: I remember doing that actually) yeah, and we used that, with people's permission and we took it to [names the LA] and there was never any objection in fact a lot of them said wouldn't we like this for us.

K: What I've done is just take it that this is expected, this is what we do and its part of what [names the LA] is, and the function of [names the LA], so rather than justifying it, there has been a comment this year that hasn't been as positive as it could have been and this was reported back to [names the director of education], so I just sent a little email to everybody and very quickly it's amazing the response you get, and I know if there is going to be a problem with that we've got the evidence base,

- we've got the pamphlet we've done together recently as a case study with Headspace.
- A: Oh have you, would it be possible for me to see that do you think?
- K: Yes of course it's out there really isn't it and showing the different impact that it's had. But I'm just taking it that this is what we do and this is our practice and part of what we do.
- A: And it's part of the package for new Headteachers.
- I: No, and without this there is **nothing**.
- A: Because it's firmly established now within, well apart from the conference that's for all Headteachers but this is for new Heads.
- I: But the setting up of the Headspace groups has definitely encouraged people to go to the conference without the Headspace groups the conference would be done by now, (absolutely) because the old people move...and the old people, who go every year, you know they've gone, they've gone so it's the continuation for the good of [names the LA] as well .
- A: For wellbeing, for Headteacher wellbeing.
- I: Yes, and it gives people permission to say I need this time and people are becoming more confident saying I want to go to the conference, I need this, you know because we are very good at taking the back place, you know "don't worry about me".
- A: But this is sort of six times a year and the conference is once a year.
- J: I do see a lot of evidence of heads thinking about themselves and their own wellbeing a lot more and actually saying when they need time they take time without feeling guilty and giving themselves that permission which is hard I think but after a while, it becomes something which is much more internalised and I think they do it.
- A: When you first get your headship you feel that you've got to be the answer to all things all people at all times don't you, 100% of the time, [I: and you can't be!] but you feel like you need to even if you actually can't, and you're right because you kind of talk to us about that, you facilitated those kind of conversations and people actually realised that for themselves, actually our job is not to work the longest hours or be in school the longest it's to take tricky difficult situations and I think you're right, once you've established that in those early sessions it sets your headship up for a long time.
- I: And I think it's a good message to give to your staff, that it's ok to look after yourself and I think gone are the days, hopefully in any case, where people are going out underneath the windows to try and get out, I've done that (K: I've done that) I know I went to a school where the Deputy Head used to watch people and clock them as they were going out, that was my predecessor, but people felt quite intimidated and it's important that you recognise people have lives as well and if they're not happy they won't work well (A: Healthy lifestyle balance) and I

- always found that being, giving that bit extra looking after their wellbeing, when you want something back in spadeloads.*
- K: *It is that self-awareness that's critical because if you can't be aware of your own feelings it's how then you're going to respond to how somebody else feels and it's also about relationships for me, all of what we do is leading the children and teaching them to learn, it's about that relationship and learn and building and developing and formalising and giving some people who find it difficult.*
- A: *One of the things we've continue to do that you modelled for us is the joy thing, and we make a joke of it but you know, particularly like today when somebody comes with a big issue that's really making life difficult for them it's easy to sink into a pit of despair, so we make a point now of doing what you, I want to say taught us to do but it is almost like you go back to what you've been taught and you didn't teach us explicitly this is what you must do but it's ingrained in us now so we have that, right, c'mon, before we delve into the sorrows and stresses let's have a good few joys personal joys/work life joys to remind us that life is not bleak and this too shall pass. You know that's what we say to each other, this will pass, you will be ok and it is really valuable and I don't suppose you realise how valuable it is when you're doing it because you're new to the job and you're still learning and it's in there but it hasn't taken root until 3 or 4 years later, it's taken root with us and we fall back on that naturally which is really valuable.*
- I: *And I think the fact that these groups are still meeting shows how much it matters.*
- K: *And another one for me is J might agree with this, but it's a skill with facilitation (I: yes definitely) and I think that is really key having that blend of knowing when to intervene, know to let the group continue if they need to continue, if it's an appropriate stopping them and also the input of theory the input of what's out there, articles in magazines, books, you know, have you had a look in this book, try this one, because we don't get time to do that but having somebody that brings in, you know, this is a really nice email or this book have a read of that, that's really helpful and also that you're constant, you have a constant person that has gone through all of those Headspace programs really and that's what's been good that consistency and constancy.*
- A: *It sets up a model I think being part of the process that it isn't what we call a BMW session it's not bitching, moaning and whinging its actually, you do a bit of that but it's constructive, get things off your chest and then people coach you through it, put it back on you and then you plan.*
- I: *Which is the difference between a group of people who come together and have a coffee (have a whinge) which is ok.*
- K: *What they will do, if they do that, if they come together is they'll talk about the issues rather than about themselves and I think*

that is the bit, for me half past 9 is when we start doing Headspace and for me doing Headspace is not talking about budgets and blah blah all that stuff but its talking about how those things are impacting and how people are dealing with that stuff so it's almost like flipping stuff. I know with some groups we've had a big notice on the door that's says like Ofsted this way and we have a taboo and we don't mention the O word because otherwise people get into that (I: become fixated), on the other hand, you know if people are going through a difficult experience or they've had an awful, bad experience then it's important that we give them an opportunity to talk about it.

I: I think I've still got on my computer the feedback that people gave, if you, I'm sure people wouldn't mind you using it, if you would like some quotes, would that be any use?

A: You've already shared it once before haven't you? You've already shared it with [names the LA] (yes) so I think it's ethically ok for me to use something that's already out there in the public domain, because permissions already been given to you (yes people have said it was fine, as long as it, and I mean it won't have their names, anonymous) obviously yes anonymous.

K: And as it happens we've got the summer conference, this Headship is going to talk about the impact that it's had on their leadership as well because a lot of people have been involved in Headspace it's a celebration it's also a way to selling it to everybody else when the budgets are tight, those that haven't been involved in it, you know those who are on the periphery of [names the LA] may not engage with the exec, it's a way of saying this is the difference it's made and so there is that, they're going to share what difference the impact it's had.

A: That's interesting, well thank you very much ladies.

Recording ended.

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